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MANFRED'S QUEST.
By OLD SLEUTH.

A SERIES OF THE MOST THRILLING DETECTIVE STORIES EVER PUBLISHED.

No. 36 | SINGLE NUMBER. | GEORGE MUNRO, PUBLISHER, Nos. 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK. | PRICE 5 CENTS. | Vol. II.

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Or, THE MYSTERY OF A TRUNK.

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He approached, and quickly reaching forward, tore aside the veil.

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CHAPTER I.

"THERE'S something queer about that trunk!"

The speaker was the baggage-master of one of the railroad termini in New York City.

There were a number of men standing around who overheard the remark, and among them was a handsome, shrewd-faced young man who had been the chief actor in a number of singular adventures.

The young man alluded to stood smoking a cigar, but as the baggage-master spoke, his eye followed the direction indicated by the speaker, and his glance rested on a small, new trunk on which was painted the initials, "Miss M. M. S., N. Y."

Having uttered the remark, the baggage-master went about his business, and was actively engaged for fully an hour, when his duties became less imperative, and it was then the young man who had so particularly noted the exclamation with which we open our narrative, advanced and said:

"You're kept pretty busy here?"

The baggageman looked the stranger over, and, evidently well pleased with his appearance, said:

"Yes; we're pretty busy here at times."

"Have a cigar?"

The speaker held forth a beauty, a genuine Reina Victoria. The baggage-master was a judge of cigars, and at once recognized that it was the real article that was offered, and he accepted the gift.

"I heard you say there was something queer about that trunk."

The speaker pointed to the little, new box marked "Miss M. M. S."

"Yes, there is something queer about that trunk."

"Will you tell me why you say there is something queer about it?"

The baggageman drew close to the questioner, and said:

"I'll tell you: it's been here two weeks, and has not been called for; but there is nothing strange in that fact alone, as we sometimes have trunks that are never called for, and it's often that trunks are left on our hands for months; but all the same, there's something queer about that little, new trunk."

"What is queer about that particular trunk?"

"It haunts me."

"It haunts you?"

"Yes; whenever I look at it there seems to come a voice pleading to me from it; and, indeed, I think of it nights; indeed, a voice appears to follow me, calling on me all the time."

"Trunks don't talk," said the interrogator.

"I'm no fool; I know that; but there's something strange in the fact that the little, new trunk appeals to me so mysteriously all the time, especially when I am so used to handling trunks—sometimes a thousand a day. Why, I've dreamed about that trunk!"

"Dreamed about it?"

"Yes."

"What did you dream?"

"It seems ridiculous to tell."

"Tell me."

"Why should I tell you?"

"Somehow I've conceived a strange interest in that trunk."

"You have, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well, who are you?"

The stranger reached over and whispered:

"I'm a detective."

"A regular?"

"Yes."

"Hang it, I'm glad of it! I've thought of speaking to a detective about that trunk. I tell you there is something very mysterious about it."

"You say you had a dream about the trunk?"

"Yes, I did."

"Tell me your dream."

"I dreamed that one night I was just leaving the baggage-room when a lady, veiled, suddenly appeared and asked about that very trunk. I asked her if she had the checks, and she said: 'Never mind the checks; open it!' and she disappeared, and I awoke to find I had been dreaming; but ever since there has seemed to come a voice to me, saying: 'Open me! open me.'"

Manfred, the wonderful ventriloquist detective, had stepped close to the trunk, and had fixed in his mind the figures and general appearance of the check upon it.

"Have you ever made any inquiries about the trunk?"

"Yes; I wrote a letter to the baggage-master up at the station where it was shipped, but he has no recollection of it; all he knows is that the numbered duplicate checks are gone from his strap, but he don't recollect anything about the trunk or the party who had it checked."

"How long has the trunk been here?"

"About two weeks."

"Did it come in on a morning or an evening train?"

"It came on a late train."

"You are sure of that?"

"Yes; I recollect when it came."

"It was the 10:20 train from C——?"

"Yes," ejaculated the baggageman, as he fixed his eyes on the detective in a suspicious manner.

"It was a rainy night?" said the detective.

"A rainy night? you bet it was one of the worst nights I ever experienced, and that is how I remember it so well, the night the trunk arrived. But see here, what are you getting at?"

"How do you mean?"

"You're placing the trunk; I reckon you know something about it."

"No, I do not; but I return your remark, and say you've a theory."

The baggageman looked around to see that he was not observed, and said:

"Between you and me, there is an idea running through my head."

"What is your idea?"

"The C—— mystery!"

"The old man who committed suicide?"

"Well, yes; that was the verdict; but you know there are those who still persist in saying he did not commit suicide."

"I have heard such rumors."

"Yes, and I've heard it said there was a woman in the case."

"I've heard that too."

"And it is said his will can not be found; and his acquaintances say, also his lawyer, that he made a will."

"I've heard all that, but what has it got to do with the trunk?"

"Hang it! I might as well tell you."

"Yes, tell me."

"I had another dream about that trunk."

"What did you dream the second time?"

"I dreamed I opened it."

"Well?"

"And found the missing will."

CHAPTER II.

To our old-time readers Manfred the detective is a familiar personage, and to our new readers we will say that he was an individual possessed of weird and most wonderful powers. Among other accomplishments, he was the most remarkable ventriloquist that ever attempted vocal deceptions. He had become a detective through a combination of circumstances of the most startling character; and having once adopted the profession, he had brought into play his great powers, and had utilized them in the most effective manner.

Two weeks prior to the opening of our narrative, the detective had encountered a strange adventure, and when he accidentally fell upon the trunk mystery he put certain little facts together, and spun out a theory that caused him to connect the two incidents.

Manfred was on a train running from Albany to New York. He occupied a seat in a palace car, and had fallen asleep when the train came to a halt at C——, a station little less than sixty miles from the city. The detective only half roused himself, and would have dropped off once more into a doze, but for a little incident which caused him to brighten up and become interested and observant.

There was but one vacant seat in the palace car, and that seat was the one just ahead of the chair occupied by the detective, and it was the fact of an occupant taking possession of it that aroused him.

The incident was a very commonplace one, and to an ordinary person would not have attracted more than passing attention; but the detective was not an ordinary person; he was accustomed to note and observe little indices that would have escaped the attention of one less observant.

The occupant of the seat was a lady who was closely veiled, and as she was evidently traveling alone, the fact was not an unusual one; but our hero at a glance noted that the veiled female passenger was young, and laboring under great excitement.

The evidences of her trepidation could only have been noted by a keen and practiced observer, and the latter the detective was, and at once he determined that there was something unusual in the appearance and manner of the stranger. He resolved, if possible, to see her face; indeed, he conceived it possible that he might make an excuse for addressing her, but it was some time before an opportunity offered.

Manfred pretended to fall asleep, and while so pretending saw that several times the veiled passenger half turned and glanced at him from under her veil, and she also at intervals glanced toward one and another of the dozing passengers.

The incident might have passed from his memory as soon as the train arrived at the depot, were it not for a certain singular and startling discovery made by our hero.

While pretending to be asleep, as stated, he was carefully watching the veiled lady, and soon he made a discov-

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ery that increased his interest, and caused him to study the stranger even more carefully.

On her veil he discovered a spot, and he managed to get close enough to, in a seemingly careless manner, establish the fact that the spot was a drop of blood, a mark that had evidently been made by a bloody finger.

The train thundered on, and the detective continued his observations, and his mind revolved several plans for addresssing the veiled lady. A feeling had come over him that there was a tragedy connected with her coming aboard the train. Her excited manner, evident nervousness, and furtive glances at her fellow-passengers, together with the discovery of the blood-stain, caused the detective to form a thousand theories in his mind.

At length the train stopped at the last station before driving along to New York, and the lady turned to our hero, and in a low, tremulous voice asked:

"Does this train stop at N——?"

"No, madame; this is the last stop."

The lady sprung to her feet, seized a small hand-satchel, and started for the door, when the whistle shrieked and the train started.

The lady still continued to move rapidly toward the door, when the detective leaped to his feet and followed her, and on the platform caught hold of her just as she was about to spring from the moving train. The cars had attained a pretty considerable momentum at the instant.

"My dear madame, you would be certainly killed if you leaped from the train!"

"Oh, why did you not let me leap?"

"Are you desirous of committing suicide, madame? If so, I'd adopt a less horrible method than jumping from a railroad train."

The lady spoke in an excited tone, as she said:

"I could have leaped safely, and now I will be carried all the way to New York."

"Let me see," said the detective, "mebbe I can arrange to have you let off at the next station. It would be a pity to carry you away to New York."

The two were still standing on the platform, the train was under full headway, and thundered along with the usual rattle and roar, when suddenly there came a gust of wind tearing through a cut from the river-side, and the lady's veil was lifted from her face, as the swaying of the car caused her to grasp the rail-guard with both hands.

The veil was only lifted aside for a second, but within that second the detective had discovered that the passenger was not only young but very beautiful, and also that her face wore a frightened look, and that she was as pale as a corpse.

"I will speak to the conductor, *miss*, if you desire it," said our hero. He did not address the mysterious passenger as madame after the raising of the veil by the treacherous gust of wind.

A moment the lady appeared to think, and then she said:

"I am very much obliged, but since I have made a mistake, I will have to be content. It does not make much difference; I will go on to the city."

"You had better enter the car," said Manfred.

A furious storm had broken over the scene, and the rain commenced to fall in torrents. The detective opened the car door and caught hold of the lady's arm. He could see that she was trembling like as aspen leaf.

"It is very provoking," he said, in a consoling tone.

"It don't make much difference, after all," answered the lady, and she re-entered the car and resumed her seat.

During the time the two had stood upon the platform outside the car, the detective had been making close observations, and upon their return inside he still continued his study. He was deeply interested.

At length the train neared the city, and the lady rose from her seat, leaving her satchel or, rather, what was nothing more than a small, well-worn reticule.

At last the train ran into the depot, when the detective encountered the greatest surprise of the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE detective had made up his mind to trail the girl upon her arrival in New York, being fully convinced that she was connected with some startling event. When she left her seat he did not follow her, as he expected her to return, as the train was still moving at a rapid rate; and, besides, the lady had left her little reticule on the seat.

Manfred sat and watched for the veiled lady's return, and was still so engaged when the cars came to a sudden halt. The train was in the depot, and the girl had not returned.

Our hero at once went to look for her, but she had most mysteriously disappeared. He waited some ten or fifteen minutes, but she did not return for her reticule; and when he made inquiries of the train hands, he could not find one that had seen her.

Manfred hovered round the depot for over an hour. The brakeman had taken possession of the reticule, and later on had turned it over to the detective, and the cars were run out on a side-track, but not a glimpse did our hero catch of the mysterious passenger.

"Well, this is a most singular disappearance!" he muttered, and he proceeded to inquire at the baggage-office if a party answering the mysterious passenger's description had called for baggage. The baggageman had not seen her, and the detective was at length compelled to give it up, satisfied that, for the time being, he had been baffled.

Upon reaching his apartments in the city, Manfred opened the reticule; but, alas! it was empty; there was not a single article in it—not even a letter, a thimble, or a card; and he muttered:

"Aha! I see. She meant to steal away, and she has left no trace behind!"

From the hour the detective misssed the fair girl in the cars up to the time that he ran across the trunk in the baggage-room, he had not been able to trace the mysterious lady passenger; and when he was loitering around the baggage on the day as described in the opening chapter of our narrative, he was on different business; indeed, all interest in the girl had almost passed from his mind; but upon hearing the baggageman's exclamation, and upon beholding the trunk, all his former interest revived. From the very first moment that his eyes fell on the trunk he felt a singular interest in it, and a suspicion crossed his mind that he had seen the owner upon that stormy night on the West Shore Road.

The singular interest of the baggageman was also a remarkable fact, and the detective was deeply interested in all the former had to say about the mysterious trunk.

"It is strange," he said to the baggageman, when the latter had related his second dream.

"What is strange?"

"That your mind should run so continually upon that trunk!"

"Yes, it is strange; and, as I told you, it haunts me, a voice seems to come continually from it, saying, 'Open me! open me! open me!'"

"Are you permitted to open it?"

"No; unless there is some suspicion of foul play; and in a couple of days it will go among the unclaimed baggage in the storage-room."

"Then you will probably forget all about it."

"I hope I may, for it worries me."

The baggageman had alluded to a mysterious suicide which had happened near the town of C——, quite a thriving place, located on the Hudson.

There had lived in the town many years a mysterious sort of man, who appeared to live the life of a semi-recluse, as he never had anything to say to his neighbors, and never mixed with them in any way.

He had lived in the town about twenty years. He had first come and had purchased the property where he ever afterward resided. His purchase was a small comfortable house with a few acres of land, but during his residence he had not spent one penny on the place, and it had become greatly dilapidated.

There was a lawyer living in the city who sometimes visited the old man, and the former was the only party with whom he held intercourse. So singular was he that when he made purchases he merely pointed to the articles he wanted, and tendered the money for payment of the same, and never was he known to speak to any one save the mysterious lawyer who came up from the city. Indeed he pretended to be stone deaf, but a boy had once heard him talking with his one visitor; and it was known that the deafness was a pretense; but nevertheless he persisted in maintaining silence, and was never heard to speak to any of his neighbors.

Once he had been arrested for some trivial matter, a trumped-up charge, and he had been brought before the squire, but nothing succeeded in inducing him to speak, and he was finally discharged.

Thus matters had gone on for twenty years, when one day it was noticed that the old man was visited by a young lady; she remained with him a few days, and then suddenly disappeared and was not seen again.

The recluse appeared to have plenty of money, as he always paid for what he bought, and lived well as far as eating was concerned, judging from his purchases.

Thus matters stood until there came a time when the old man was missed. Two days passed, and he did not appear to buy his milk, meat, or bread; and the fact began to be commented on. The third day passed, and nothing was seen of him, when a number of villagers went to the squire, and told him it was his duty to make an investigation.

The squire summoned the town constable, and, accompanied by a number of the town people, went to the old man's house.

The latter stood above on the edge of a copse of wood which had been permitted to grow since the mysterious man's purchase of the property.

Upon reaching the house, the doors were found open, and the squire rapped loudly to call attention. There came no response, and the two town officials held a consultation and finally determined to enter the house. They passed through the rooms on the first floor, and found no signs of the occupant of the premises, but evidences that there had been no fires in the stoves for several days.

The two men ascended to the second floor, and had passed through one room without making any discovery, when suddenly a scream fell upon their ears, and in the hall was discovered a lad, pale, excited, and with a face bearing a look so scared it would appear he had seen a ghost.

The lad had followed the two town officials into the house, and while they had entered one room he had prowled into another, when suddenly he beheld a sight which caused him to recoil and utter the shriek that summoned the others to his aid.

CHAPTER IV.

THE lad was trembling like an aspen-leaf, and muttering:

"Oh, oh!"

"What is it, boy?" demanded the squire.

"He's there!"

"Who's there?"

"Old Mr. Silver, and he's dead!"

The two men turned pale, but the constable dashed open the door, and a horrible sight was revealed.

A corpse lay upon the floor stark and ghastly; all the blood had flowed from the body through a gaping wound in the throat.

An investigation had followed, and, when the inquest was held, a man appeared from New York claiming to be the clerk of the lawyer who did all the old man's business, and the stranger at once started the theory that it was a case of suicide; and a later careless investigation by the squire resulted in a verdict to that effect. Still, there were those who claimed it was a murder, especially one of the village doctors.

The squire was appointed administrator of the dead man's effects temporarily, and a search was made for a will, but none was found.

Meantime, the man from the city, who claimed to be the lawyer's clerk, asserted that there was a will, for he had seen it drawn and signed.

The effects in the house were of little value; there was little cash found, and the furniture, including everything, was not worth fifty dollars; and, later on, it was discovered that the deed of the house was not in the old man's name, but in the name of another party, and who that other party was no one appeared to know.

The detective was aware of all the above facts. Singularly enough, the medical examination revealed the fact that the man when found had been dead about four days, and that would bring the time of his death to the very night when our hero met the mysterious lady passenger, with blood-stains on her veil and clothing, who had entered the train at C——, and had showed signs of great excitement and trepidation, and who had so mysteriously disappeared as the train neared the depot.

Manfred had previously connected the mysterious passenger with the tragedy in his mind, but had, as stated, let his interest in the affair die out until it was revived by the accidental discovery of the trunk; and on the moment he resolved to devote his whole time to the solution of the strange mystery. He was satisfied that the trunk belonged to the mysterious passenger, and he was determined also to gain possession of it.

After some further talk with the baggageman, the detective sauntered away, and his mind was given to a plan for securing possession of the mysterious trunk.

At length he hit upon a scheme. He knew that it was an illegal procedure, but detectives are sometimes compelled to depend upon their own integrity, and take the law into their own hands.

He had no legal claim upon the uncalled-for baggage, and there was no legal method by which he could obtain possession of it; so he determined to resort to trick and device, feeling confident of his ability to make good any loss

or inconvenience that might follow the carrying out of his plan.

Several days passed, and one day, right in the midst of the busiest time, a lady appeared at the baggage counter and presented a baggage-check. The baggageman took possession of the check, and started to move away to find the corresponding numbers, when suddenly he uttered an exclamation of amazement, and his glance became riveted upon the little brass token.

The check for the mysterious trunk had at last come to the surface, and it was presented by a veiled lady.

The baggageman was greatly excited, and indeed agitated.

"Where did you get this check?" he demanded.

The lady answered:

"Where do you think I got it?"

"I wish to know."

"It is none of your business, sir! All you have to do is to deliver the trunk."

The lady was right, and the baggageman knew it, but he was anxious to learn something of the claimant of the mysterious trunk.

"You must tell me where you got that check."

"Why?"

"The trunk has been here over two weeks; how do I know that you are the proper holder of the check?"

The woman laughed, and said:

"What nonsense! I got the check at C——."

"Why did you not call for your trunk before?"

"I expected to call for it the next day, but I've been sick and I came to-day."

As the lady spoke she raised her veil and disclosed the features of a genuine fussy old maid.

The romance was knocked out of the affair at once; the fair vision of the baggageman's dream had become a waxen-haired old spinster after all, and he demanded:

"Have you an expressman to carry the trunk away?"

"Yes, I have a cab here."

"Well, let your driver come and get the trunk."

The baggageman removed the check and swung the trunk upon the delivery counter with the same indifference that he delivered any other trunk; as stated, the romance had vanished and dissolved all out of the affair.

A cabman stepped forward and swung the trunk on his shoulder, and followed by the old maid he strode away, and the baggageman went on about his duties; thus had all his worry been dispelled—thus was his ghost laid.

The lady with the trunk was driven to a hotel, the cabman was paid and drove off, and the trunk was carried into the hotel. The lady went to the office and made the inquiry:

"Is this the —— Hotel?"

"No, madame."

"Dear me, the cabman has made a mistake. I wanted to go to the —— Hotel, where I was to meet some friends. Can you get me another cab, please?"

"Yes, madame."

"Please do."

Another cab was summoned, the trunk was put on the seat, and the lady came forth.

"Where shall I drive you, madame?"

The woman gave a number in a private street and of a private house, and she was driven there. The trunk was carried up the stoop, the driver was paid, and he went away without waiting to carry the trunk inside the house.

The lady rang the bell, but there came no response to her ring, and after a few moments the servant of the adjoining house stuck her head out of a window and said:

"No one lives there."

"Dear me! have I made a mistake?"

The lady seized the trunk, which was a small one, and walked away.

CHAPTER V.

As the heroine of so many singular mistakes moved away, she muttered, in a singularly suggestive tone of voice:

"Hang me, if this ain't the heaviest trunk for a small one I ever handled."

She tugged it along, however, and proceeded around the square, and at length entered the garden gate of a house situated some distance back from the line of the street fence. She ascended the stoop and entered the house with a night-key, and carried the trunk upstairs and deposited it on the floor of a gorgeously furnished room on the second floor, and from her lips fell the remark:

"Well, I've got it all safe and sound, and now we'll see what we can discover."

While the lady was speaking, a most singular transformation was taking place, and in a few seconds the waxen-haired old maid had been transformed into the handsome Manfred, the wonderful ventriloquist detective.

Manfred sat for a few moments gazing at the trunk, little dreaming of the startling surprise that awaited him when he should force the lock and raise the lid.

A moment passed while he rummaged in a drawer; he produced a bunch of keys, and set to work to open the stolen trunk. None of the keys would fit, and at length he took a hammer and chisel and broke the lock, when he raised the lid and uttered an exclamation of surprise and wonder, and an instant later murmured:

"What have I done? Great Cæsar! I am a thief!"

The detective might well utter an exclamation of wonder, as the first thing that greeted his eyes was stacks of greenbacks and a heap of glittering gold.

"Hang the thing!" he muttered. "I wish I had let it stay to haunt the baggageman. Where will this end? What will come of this adventure?"

A moment he stood and considered, and at length said:

"Well, I'm in for it, anyhow. I might as well be killed for an ox as a sheep. I'll examine the thing clear through."

The result of the examination was a startling discovery. He found wealth in money and bonds to the value of half a million dollars; besides the gold and bills he found government unregistered bonds in value aggregating the amount named; besides, he found caskets containing rare gems and jewels of almost incalculable value.

"Well, I'm in a scrape!" he muttered. "What shall I do? I've an elephant on my hands this time, sure."

He searched the trunk through and through, but not the least scrap of paper could he find leading to an identification of the owner of the treasure trunk.

It was night when our hero restored all the treasure to the trunk, and the ghost had fallen to his trail instead of the poor baggageman.

That night our hero lay and dreamed and dreamed. He "dreamed a dream," and every time the ruling incident of his dream was connected with that wonderful trunk.

Morning came, and, for the first time in his life, Manfred trembled at the idea of going forth and meeting his fellow-man face to face; but after a good meal prepared by his solitary male servant, he braced up; his mind resumed its wonted decision and power.

"It's all right," he muttered; "I'll investigate this mystery· indeed, I'll solve it; my motives are the best,

and when I find the rightful owner to all this treasure, I can restore it intact to a farthing; but hang me, it's lucky I took all the precaution I did in securing the infernal thing!"

The detective concluded to go down and see the baggage-master. He was anxious to hear what the man would have to say about the trunk. He reached the baggage-room at a time when the baggage-master was idle, and said:

"Hello!"

"Hello; let me see," answered the baggageman, "I've seen you before."

The detective produced another excellent cigar.

"Oh, yes; I recollect you now. I was telling you about that mysterious trunk?"

"Yes."

"Well, the owner turned up."

"She did, eh?"

"Yes."

"A beautiful young lady, of course?"

"All the romance was knocked out of that affair in about four minutes."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, yesterday a veiled lady appeared here, and, handing me a check, said: 'I want my trunk!' I took the check, glanced at it, and my heart stood still; it was a demand for the mysterious trunk, and the lady was veiled, and I tell you I was excited; but, in about four minutes, as I tell you, the romance all dissolved."

"How so?"

"The spell was broken."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"How so?"

"The claimant was a sharp-voiced, waxen-haired old maid, who had been taken with the rheumatism and had left the pesky old trunk here for convenience' sake."

"Is that so?"

"Yes; and I swung her out her old bag in a jiffy, I tell you."

"And you had all your worry for nothing?"

"Yes."

"You are sure, however, it was the proper owner?"

"Certainly; she had the right duplicate check, and it was her trunk, there is no doubt about that! and I'm glad it's gone, I am; and you'll never hear me worrying about an uncalled-for trunk again, you bet."

The two men had a good laugh, and later on the detective departed.

Manfred, indeed, had an elephant on his hands; day and night the idea and responsibility of his possession haunted him.

A day or two following his discovery, he went to C—— and spent several days doing fine detective work, and gathering facts connected with the life and death of the old man Silver. He remembered that the initials on the trunk were "M. M. S.," and the S. was another link in the chain that connected the owner of the trunk with the old man who had committed suicide, or who had been murdered; and the question arose, who was the murderer, if the latter were the real fact? Could it be possible that the beautiful, mysterious female passenger was the assassin?

The detective particularly inquired concerning the lady who had remained a few days with the strange old man. He found an old colored woman who had seen the lady several times, and she described the old recluse's visitor as young and beautiful.

Manfred remained a week, and during the time picked up many strange and singular facts, and at length he determined to return to New York, and, if possible, get upon the trail of the lawyer who had figured in the case.

The detective took a night train to New York; and on the road fell into a most startling and thrilling adventure.

CHAPTER VI.

MANFRED possessed certain occult powers such as has been within the province of but few mortals, and among his other accomplishments, as intimated in a preceding chapter, was a ventriloquial gift. His vocal feats were the most wonderful ever recorded, he having the power literally to throw his voice where he pleased; and he was also capable of the most astonishing vocal changes and inflections besides being a most remarkable imitator.

The detective took a night train, and singularly enough occupied the same seat in the car he had occupied on the night when he met the lady with the blood-stains on her veil and clothing.

The detective was tired, and settled down for a nap; and again it was a singular fact that when he entered the car there was but one seat vacant, and the latter was the chair adjoining his own.

The train thundered along, and the detective was aroused when it came to a halt at the first station from where he had boarded it; and when he awoke, to his astonishment he beheld a veiled lady seated in the chair that had been vacant at the time he entered the car.

For an instant the detective stared, as though confronted by an apparition. It was so strange, the seeming repetition of the adventure of the two weeks previous.

Manfred watched the veiled lady, and discovered that she was also exceedingly nervous and restless, as the former veiled lady had been.

Not for a moment did it enter our hero's mind that the two veiled ladies were identical, but it was certainly a singular and remarkable incident, and the similarity of the adventure was further carried out when, as we have stated, the detective discovered that the veiled lady number two was evidently agitated and excited.

A few moments passed; the detective glanced around the car, and soon discovered that there was another passenger that was keenly watching the veiled lady; and later on the detective noticed that the veiled lady was aware that she was being watched; and it also became evident that the fact was the occasion of her nervousness and agitation.

A study of the face of the man who was watching the lady revealed the fact that he was a sinister-looking rascal, a man capable of any wicked and desperate deed.

"Well, here is an adventure," thought Manfred, as he pretended to sleep, but in reality devoted himself to covertly watching the two individuals that had attracted his attention.

Several times he saw the lady turn round and glance through her veil, and her movements indicated that she would like to speak to him.

"I wonder what it all means?" mentally queried the detective.

A few moments passed, and he saw the veiled lady slyly take a card and write a few words upon it, and later on she managed to pass the card to our hero.

Manfred was amazed, but he was equal to the occasion. He saw that the lady did not wish it known that she had

communicated with him, and he watched his opportunity to secure the card, and also managed to read it without attracting observation.

On the card was penciled the following singular request:

"Sir, will you please pretend to be acquainted with me and in my company, and I will explain?"

The card was signed:

"A lady in peril."

The detective well knew how to play his part, and waited until an opportunity offered, when, in the most natural and ordinary manner, he picked up the lady's wrap and threw it across her shoulders; the act was performed in such a conventional manner, one would have supposed, as a matter of course, that he and the veiled lady were in company.

As the detective adjusted the wrap, he carelessly looked round, and his glance passed over the man who had been watching the lady for whom he had performed the service, and he observed a look of surprise and evident disappointment pass over the man's face. At the same instant, in a perfectly natural manner, the lady protested against wearing the wrap, and the gentleman persisted, and finally prevailed and resumed his seat.

A moment later the veiled lady said in a low tone, from under her veil:

"Well done; I am much obliged."

Manfred pretended to make a conventional remark—his manner so indicated—but in reality he said:

"Madame, I will be glad to be of any service to you."

The lady faced round and said:

"Be careful how you promise."

"Why?"

"Your promise may invite a peril."

"The prospect would not deter me from a renewal of my offer."

"You would really be of service to me?"

"Certainly."

"And with a danger to do so?"

"Certainly; and enjoy the service."

"Have you ever encountered peril?"

"My life has been passed amidst constant peril."

"This must all appear strange to you?"

"I am accustomed to strange incidents."

"It would seem bold for me to appeal to a total stranger."

"Not at all; if your safety is threatened you did perfectly right to appeal to me."

"I am being pursued by a villain."

"The fellow seated in chair 20?"

"Yes."

"I have observed him."

"You have observed him?"

"Yes."

"How did you come to watch him?"

"Because I discovered he was watching you."

"That is strange."

"How strange?"

"That you should note such a trifling incident."

"I am accustomed to keep my eyes and ears open; it is a part of my business."

"What is your business, sir?"

The detective did not answer.

"Ah, my question is impertinent?"

"No, but I would know more of the circumstances attending your peril before I tell you my business."

"I can only tell you, sir, that I have discovered that the man in seat 20 is following me."

"How do you know he is following you?"

"I am positive."

"What proof have you?"

"He has been on my track several days."

"Has he ever addressed you?"

"No; I have managed to evade him."

"Do you know of any reason why he should follow you?"

The lady did not make an immediate reply, and the detective asked:

"Is he an officer?"

"No," replied the lady; "he is a villain!"

CHAPTER VII.

"THEN you know him?" said the detective.

"No, I do not know him; but I do know he is a villain, simply because there is no reason why I should be pursued by an officer, I would not attempt to evade an officer."

"Then the man must have some motive in following you."

"He has."

"Do you suspect his motive?"

"I do."

"What do you suspect?"

A moment the lady was silent, but at length she said:

"I may startle you if I answer your question."

"I will give no sign if I am startled."

"The man means to murder me!"

The detective was startled, as it was certainly a startling declaration the woman had made.

"He means to murder you?" repeated our hero, in a calm voice.

"Yes."

"Why should he seek to murder you?"

"It is a long story, and one I can not consistently repeat to an absolute stranger."

"There may be reasons why you should repeat the story to me."

"I wish there were."

"Why do you not do so?"

"I dare not."

"You dare not?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I can not tell without letting you into my secret, but I will assure you I am an honorable, innocent and a persecuted woman, and I am worthy the protection of a gentleman against the purposes of that villain."

"You certainly are, madame, and you shall have my protection at all hazards."

"All I ask is that you will aid me to evade him—ay, to escape him—when the train reaches New York."

"I will do so; you can rely upon me."

"And some day you may be proud of the service, sir; and I will ask that before we separate you will give me your name and address. I may communicate with you some day in the near future."

"You shall have my name and address, madame, but listen; it may be well for you to confide in me."

"I feel that I could trust you, but I might make a mistake."

"You need not fear; I am an officer!"

"You are an officer?"

"I am."

"A police detective?"

"A detective."

A moment the lady was silent, but at length she remarked:

"It is strange I should have chanced to make an appeal to you."

"There are other strange incidents connected with our meeting, madame."

"What are they?"

"I can not tell you now, but I will tell you some day."

"Will you answer me a question fairly, sir?"

"I will."

"Were you following me?"

"I was not."

"Was our meeting accidental?"

"Perfectly so."

"And you are really a detective?"

"I am."

"Then you will aid me?"

"I will."

"You will keep that fellow from me?"

"I will."

"If I can once escape him in New York, I can take care of myself."

"I will see that you escape him."

"He looks like a desperate man."

"Yes, he does look like a villain, but we will take care of him."

Here followed an interval of silence, but at length the lady said:

"I might need your services as an officer. Are you at liberty to engage in a new enterprise?"

"I am. At present my time is my own."

"Is there a later train than this one that runs to New York?"

"Yes."

"One that stops at an intermediate station?"

"Yes; there is a train that comes through in about an hour and a quarter."

"Would it be convenient for you to leave the train at the next station and take the late train to the city?"

"Perfectly convenient."

"We may lose that man with less trouble."

"A good scheme."

"We can be all ready and leave the train suddenly."

"Yes, we can; I see that you have some experience."

"If you ever come to hear my history you will know why I am so well experienced."

"I trust some day I will hear your story."

"It is possible I may make a confidant of you very soon; the time has arrived when I need an adviser; it may be that I shall select you, if you are prepared to accept the service."

"I know of no reason why I should not accept the service."

At this moment the train came to a halt, and the woman whispered:

"Be ready."

"I am ready."

"We go!"

"Yes."

The train made but a short stop, and our hero and the mysterious veiled lady at the last moment left their seats and hurried to the platform; indeed the cars were moving when Manfred assisted the lady to alight.

The train dashed on, when, in a low tone, the woman said:

"It is as I suspected."

"What has occurred?"

"That man has just leaped from the train."

The woman glanced in a certain direction, and the detective followed her glance.

The woman was deeply agitated, and in a tremulous voice said:

"He is very persistent. I will have trouble to escape."

"No, you will not," answered our hero, in an assured voice, adding, "He shall not proceed on the next train."

"How will you prevent his doing so?"

"Leave that to me."

"Oh, is it possible that you can leave him behind?"

"I assure you he shall not go on the next train."

Meantime the man had disappeared.

"Have you plenty of nerve?" asked Manfred.

"I have."

"I have thought of a scheme. I will leave you alone for a few minutes."

"For what reason?"

"That man may come and address you."

"I dare not permit him to do so."

"You need not fear."

The woman glanced around furtively. There was no one on the platform, and she said:

"If you leave a moment he may steal up and kill me."

"Is the matter so desperate?"

"Yes; I believe that already blood is on his hands."

"I will guarantee you safety."

The woman fixed a keen glance from under her veil on the detective.

"Are you really what you seem?" she asked.

"I am an honorable man."

"And you propose to leave when an assassin is lurking around?"

"You need not fear."

CHAPTER VIII.

"WILL you name your purpose?"

"I wish for a chance to speak to the man, an excuse for leaving him behind."

The above conversation was passed within a few minutes after the departure of the train.

"I will trust you and do as you direct."

During all the time that our hero had been engaged in talking to the strange lady, he had not seen her face; and yet a certain weird suspicion was running through his mind. It had occurred to him that there was a certain similarity in the tones of the voices of the two veiled ladies. He did not deem it probable that the two were identical.

"You will understand that I shall call out some misleading words to you?"

"Yes."

"You will answer accordingly?"

"Yes."

"I will go away just for an instant, and then come back and say something."

"All right, I will understand."

The detective stepped off the platform, but in a moment returned and called in a loud tone:

"Go into the sitting-room. I will have to leave you for half an hour."

"Where are you going?"

"Out in the village. I will be back in time for the train."

"Hurry back."

"I will."

The detective departed in the darkness, and a moment later a man came hurriedly from an opposite direction.

He advanced along the platform, and approached the veiled lady.

The latter would have moved away, but the man reached her and said:

"Excuse me, madame."

The lady made no answer.

"I may have made a mistake, madame."

"What have I to do with your mistakes, sir?"

"I am looking for a lady."

"What have I to do, sir, with your search for a lady?"

"You may be the lady I am searching for."

"Sir, you are insulting. I shall summon assistance."

"No, you will not. Attempt to make an outcry, and I will kill you where you stand."

The woman stood like one transfixed.

He approached, and quickly reaching forward, tore aside the veil. The lady screamed, and the next instant the man who had removed the veil fell headlong to the platform floor, and our hero stood beside the lady.

The whole incident occurred within a minute, and, as it chanced, the station man for the moment was away, and no one happened to hear the lady's sudden outcry.

The man who had been felled leaped to his feet; at the same instant our hero said to the lady:

"Enter the sitting-room."

The lady obeyed, as the man approached our hero.

"You knocked me down?"

"I did."

"Why?"

"You need not ask why; you know."

"Yes, I know more than you think."

"So much the better for you, sir."

"And so much the worse for you! Listen: take my advice and leave here."

"Are you crazy, my friend?"

"I am not crazy; and let me tell you that the lady is not under your protection; she is a stranger to you. She is playing one of her old tricks. She is crazy. I am the keeper in a mad-house. I have been in search of this lady for two weeks."

Our hero was staggered for the moment. He had not yet seen the lady's face, and as he thought the matter over and recalled all the strange incidents, the suspicion crossed his mind that there was a bare possibility that the man told the truth.

"You say the lady is crazy?"

"Yes; she escaped a week ago. She is one of the cutest mad persons that ever got out of an asylum. She has appealed to you for protection, and you, gentleman-like, believed her in peril; she is in no peril, only I must take her back with me!"

"Why did you not seize her in the car?"

"I did not wish to make a scene."

"Why did you not come and claim her openly, and not wait until I went away?"

"I thought the easiest way the best."

"And she is crazy?"

"Yes."

"See here, mister, I wish to go in and exchange a few words with the lady, and if I judge your words to be true I will not interfere with you."

"Bah! She will fool you!"

"No, she will not, for I have already half suspected what you have told me."

"She will tell you a cunning story."

"Let her, she will not deceive me; but why did you assault her?"

"I did not assault her; I only wished to raise her veil to let her know that I recognized her."

This statement of the man was also reasonable, and our hero said:

"I already half believe your story."

At this moment the veiled lady came from the waiting room, and she demanded:

"What is that man telling you?"

The detective answered promptly:

"He tells me you have just escaped from a mad-house. He says you are a cunning lunatic."

"And he claims to be a keeper?"

"Yes."

"Sir, part of his statement is true. I have just escaped from a mad-house, where I was placed by wicked people; but I am not a lunatic, and that man is not a keeper. He is a villain and in the service of the wicked people who placed me in the asylum."

The detective was getting a little bewildered. The lady's frank admission that she had escaped from an asylum accorded with what she had hinted at on the train; and the statement that she was not insane appeared reasonable; and her declaration that the man was not a keeper appeared probable.

"Is this man one of the keepers?"

"He is not."

The man laughed, and said:

"I told you she was cunning; but she admits she has escaped from a mad-house."

"Yes; I do admit that I have escaped from a mad house, but I deny that I am mad or ever was mad, and I deny that you are a keeper; you are a scoundrel in the employ of those who placed me in the mad-house."

"You see, sir," said the man.

"I can not say that I do see my way clearly."

"You will surrender the lady to me?"

"No."

"What?"

"No."

"You will not surrender her?"

"I will not."

"But you know I do not desire to have any trouble, sir! You will interfere with me at your peril!"

"The lady is under my protection."

"She is a lunatic."

"She is under my protection!"

"Is she?" exclaimed the man, as he drew a pistol out and aimed it at our hero.

CHAPTER IX.

"I WOULDN'T advise you to aim that pistol at me," said Manfred, in a calm tone.

"You are interfering with me in the discharge of my duty."

"I am not."

"You are."

The man made a movement as though about to shoot, when Manfred exclaimed:

"Seize him!"

Then sounded a voice behind the man's ear, saying:

"All right, I've got him."

The man turned suddenly, when our hero leaped forward and dealt him a blow that caused him to reel and fall, and as he fell the weapon dropped from his grasp. The detective seized it, and calmly waited for the man to regain his feet. As the latter did so, he glanced around in a dazed sort of manner. He was looking for the man who had spoken behind his ear, and had exclaimed "All right."

"I have a little advice to give you," said Manfred.

"Where is the man who spoke to me?"

"Oh, he's all right. He'll be on hand again if I need him; but now let me tell you one thing: there will arrive a train here in about seven minutes going north. I want you to get aboard of that train."

"You want me to get aboard of that train?"

"Yes."

"You can not get rid of me in that way."

"Oh, yes, I can."

"This woman is a State ward; you are defying the State law when you interfere with me."

The woman interfered, and said:

"That is false; and besides, this man does not come from the asylum."

"I shall summon assistance," said the man.

"One moment," interrupted Manfred. "Come with me."

"Go with you?"

"Yes."

"Why shall I go with you?"

"I will explain."

The detective managed to convey to the man a suggestive wink; the latter appeared to understand the meaning, and he walked away toward the edge of the platform. Manfred followed, the two men crossed the track, and walked away in the darkness.

A cunning scheme had entered the detective's mind. He desired to have a little private talk with the fellow and work his scheme.

The two men walked some distance from the track, and when they came to a halt, the detective said:

"See here, my friend; you wish to gain possession of that lady?"

"I do."

"Then you must be perfectly frank with me."

"I have been."

"I know better."

"I swear the lady is an escaped lunatic."

"She admits that, and I know the statement to be true."

"What do you want?"

"You are not after her to take her back to the asylum."

"Yes, I am."

"I know better."

"What do you know?"

"I know more than you think, and I tell you if you want the woman you must be frank with me. See here, did Lawyer Dodge engage you to secure the woman?"

The man uttered an exclamation of amazement; his ejaculation was really involuntary and betrayed his astonishment, and was also an important admission.

The detective was slowly opening up a theory in connection with the man and the woman, and had he seen her face when her veil was blown aside he would have made a discovery that would have caused his hair to stand on end.

Lawyer Dodge was the lawyer who had been the adviser and business agent of the old man who had committed suicide at O——. The detective had ascertained that fact, and, furthermore, he was well satisfied that the old recluse was not a pauper but a millionaire, and he was assured also that there was a deep and singular mystery involved in the tragedy.

Manfred was fully convinced in his mind that the treasure trunk had come from the house where the tragedy had occurred, that it was the property, or, at least, in the temporary custody of the veiled beauty who had the blood stains on her veil.

"Who is Lawyer Dodge?" queried the man, after a moment.

"Don't attempt to play me," said Manfred. "You have owned up I am not fool."

"I do not understand you."

"Yes, you understand me well enough. I know something about this Silver murder."

The man again uttered an exclamation of amazement: indeed, he was completely disconcerted for the moment. He managed to recover himself, however, and asked:

"Who are you?"

"No matter who I am. Who are you?"

"I have told you."

"Yes; a lie."

"Be careful. Do not call me a liar!"

"Oh, you can not hurt any one. I am too old a bird for you. Now, mark my words, I'll advise you to take the train going north."

"I'll take no train going north."

"Yes, you will."

"Never!"

"I will arrest you."

"You will arrest me?" repeated the man.

"That is what I said."

"On what charge will you arrest me?"

"On suspicion."

"Suspicion?"

"Yes."

"I do not know what you are driving at."

"You don't, eh?"

"I do not."

"It isn't necessary to explain. I mean business, and I've given you a chance."

"I must take the lady with me if I go north."

"You will take no one with you."

"I will call for aid."

"All right, call; and the moment you do, I will put you under arrest."

"Are you an officer?"

"It takes men in full authority to make arrests."

"Are you an officer?"

"You will find out soon enough."

"See here, mister, I see what you are up to, and I've a proposition to make."

"What is your proposition?"

"You can make some money."

"I can?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"There is a large reward offered for the capture of that lady there. I will share it with you."

The detective laughed.

"Why do you laugh?"

"That you should take me for a fool."

The man advanced, and said:

"Let me whisper something in your ear."

"Do so."

The man approached and pretended to lean forward to whisper, but instead, he suddenly drew a knife and made a lunge. Our hero had anticipated his movement, and was prepared. He leaped back, and then suddenly sprung forward and dealt the man a blow that brought him to his knees. He dealt him a second blow, and the man rolled over insensible.

CHAPTER X.

THE detective had beaten the man down with the butt of his own pistol, and having, as stated, beaten him to insensibility, he stepped over his body and returned to the depot. He glanced round, but could see nothing of the veiled lady.

"Aha!" the detective muttered; "it is as I feared. Never mind, I can find her."

The detective searched around the station, when the station-master came to him and said:

"Are you looking for the lady?"

"Yes."

"She went away up the road walking very rapidly."

"How long since?"

"Not more than three minutes ago."

The detective dashed off in the direction indicated, and the station-master remarked:

"There's something strange about this affair."

The detective had gone but a short distance when he saw a form moving along the road in advance of him. It was the figure of a female. Our hero ran forward, and in a moment overtook the veiled lady.

"Ah, you are seeking to escape me!"

"No, I am seeking to escape that man."

"He can not harm you."

"What did he tell you?"

"I can not stop to inform you now, but we must get away from here."

"How can we? the train going south does not come along for an hour yet."

"No, but the north-bound train is behind time; we might catch that."

"I wish to go to the city."

"You are more particular, however, to escape from that man?"

"I am."

"We will go north; come along quickly."

A moment the woman hesitated.

"Have I not proved myself able and willing to protect you?"

"Yes."

"Then, why do you hesitate?"

"I do not know what to do."

"Come, come, or we will be too late."

"Where will we go?"

"Anywhere to get away from here."

"You appear as anxious as I."

"Yes, I am anxious."

"What have you done?"

"I will tell you when we get on the train; but remember, whatever I have done has been done in your behalf."

The woman moved along toward the station. The pair reached it just in time. The delayed train came thundering up to the station, and our hero, with the veiled lady, boarded it. The train stopped but a moment and moved away.

"Well, it is lucky we caught the train."

"Where shall we go?" demanded the lady.

"We have plenty of time to decide."

In a low, tremulous voice, the lady asked:

"Have you killed him?"

"No."

"I am glad."

"And yet he would kill you."

"Nevertheless I would not have harm come to him."

"Then you have deceived me."

"How?"

"You said you did not know the man."

"I do not."

"Did you ever see him before?"

"Not until I discovered him following me."

"Had you ever spoken to him?"

"Never, until to-night, when he assailed me. What did he tell you about me?"

"Nothing; it was not necessary."

The detective spoke in a significant tone, and the lady repeated:

"It was not necessary?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Oh, I knew you would tell me all it was needful for me to know."

"It is strange how we have met."

"Yes, it is strange—stranger than you think; and now, madame, answer me one word: Are you fearful of the consequences of a crime? Are you seeking to escape such consequences?"

"Sir, I am an innocent and abused person."

"You admitted that you escaped from an asylum."

"I did escape from a private lunatic asylum."

"And you boarded this train at C——?"

"I did."

"So did that man?"

"Yes."

"Where had you come from?"

"The village."

"How long had you been in the village?"

"A few hours."

"You were a stranger there?"

"Yes."

"What was you business there?"

"I can not tell you until I tell you my whole story."

"Will you tell me your whole story?"

"I must have time to consider."

"Did you ever see me before to-night?"

"Never."

"You are sure?"

"I am sure."

"Did you ride down on this train about two weeks ago?"

"I did not."

"You are sure?"

"Certainly, I am."

"Not on the night that Mr. Silver was murdered?"

The woman uttered a suppressed cry.

"Hush!" warned the detective.

"What do you mean?" asked the woman in a husky voice.

"I mean that you must confide in me."

"I will."

"Remove your veil."

"Not now."

"Yes, now."

"Why?"

"I must see your face."

"You think you have seen my face before?"

"I will not say; remove your veil."

"Others will see my face."

"And you do not desire that they should?"

"I do not."

"Why not?"

"You should know."

"I can not see why I should."

"You heard what that man said?"

"What did he say?"

"That I had escaped from an asylum."

"No one will recognize you."

"We can not tell."

The two were speaking in low, earnest tones.

"I must see your face."

"You shall."

"When?"

"As soon as an opportunity offers."

"Remove your veil."

"You insist?"

"I do."

"Then we will go out to the platform."

"Very well; we will go."

"And attract attention?"

"I must see your face.

"It is strange you are so persistent."

"Remove your veil just for an instant."

The woman obeyed, and the detective let an oath fall from his lips.

CHAPTER XI.

MANFRED had but a passing glimpse of the strange woman's face, and to his amazement and complete momentary discomfort he recognized the same features he had seen two weeks ago when a gust of wind tore aside a certain lady's veil.

A silence followed the raising of the veil, broken at length by the detective, who said:

"I did not think you would attempt to deceive me. I have lost confidence in all your declarations!"

"I have not deceived you!"

"And you persist?"

"I do; I have not deceived you!"

"Let me ask you one question."

The detective prepared to watch the woman closely as he put the question.

"You have lost a trunk?" he said.

"I have not lost a trunk."

"You have not lost a trunk?"

"I have not."

"And you still declare you did not ride down from C—— about two weeks ago, on the night of the great storm?"

"I did not ride down from C—— that night. I was not within three hundred miles of C—— at the time you mention."

Again the detective fell into silence. He could not understand why the mysterious woman should seek to deceive him.

"I'm sorry," he said, "you are not perfectly frank with me."

"I am perfectly frank with you."

"And you did not ride down in these cars from C—— two or three weeks ago?"

"I did not."

"You have not lost a trunk?"

"I have not lost a trunk."

"I have a lost trunk in my possession."

"Indeed?"

"Yes."

"Well, I have not lost one."

"This is all very strange," said the detective.

"Yes; and your questions and remarks are very strange."

"I have a reason for asking the questions, and I have a reason for doubting your word."

"You do doubt my word?"

"Excuse me, but I do."

"What have I said that you doubt?"

"You have said you did not lose a trunk."

"I told the truth."

"You have said you did not ride down on this train two or three weeks ago."

"I did not; and why do you doubt my word?"

"I have the best reason in the world for doubting your word."

"I do not understand."

"I will explain."

"Please do."

"I was on the train."

"Well?"

"I saw you."

"Saw me!" repeated the woman.

"Yes; I saw you and spoke to you."

"You saw me and spoke to me?"

"I did."

"Sir! it is impossible that you speak truly!"

"Why should you deny it?"

"I swear you did not see me!"

"This is all very mysterious."

"Indeed, it is."

The veiled lady's voice betrayed considerable agitation, and, after a moment, she added:

"I wish you would speak plainly, sir."

"I have spoken plainly, even to rudeness. I have dared to accuse you of deception."

"And you really believe you saw me?"

"I am sure I did."

A moment the lady was silent, but the detective could see that her agitation was very great.

"I do not know what to make of your assertion."

"Why not?"

"It seems so strange that you should make such a mistake."

"I have not made a mistake."

"You certainly have. I swear I was not on this train!"

"Can I believe you?"

"You must!"

"Why?"

"Simply because your mistake opens up and suggests a most wonderful probability."

"What is the probability?"

"That you saw some one who resembled me!"

"If I did not see you, I certainly saw some one who bears a singularly striking resemblance."

The lady's agitation evidently increased.

"Oh, sir," she said, "tell me all about it!"

At this moment the train came to a halt.

"We will alight here," he said.

"But it is so late. Where can we go? What can we do?"

"We will wait at the station; it is near morning. At four o'clock there is a boat sails from the lower town which goes direct to New York."

The two left the train, and together started to walk down to the landing, a distance of two miles.

On the road the conversation was resumed; the lady said:

"You must tell me of the lady you met."

"One word: On your sacred honor you swear it was not you?"

"I do."

"One word more: Is there to be perfect confidence between us?"

"Remember, we have but just met."

"But under remarkable circumstances."

"Yes; but I am not yet assured that I can place perfect confidence in you."

"You will when I explain."

"Please explain."

"I have been in C—— several days."

The lady's agitation again became evident.

"I told you I was a detective?"

"You did."

"I am on a particular case."

The lady made no remark.

"I am investigating the Silver mystery."

The lady uttered a scream.

"Aha! I thought so!" muttered Manfred.

The lady had grasped his arm and was trembling violently.

"What would you say?" she demanded, in a husky voice.

"What do you expect me to say?"

"I expect nothing."

"Oh, yes, you do."

"What do I expect?"

"You expect me to say something about that murder."

"Murder?" ejaculated the lady.

"Yes, murder!"

"You suspect it was a murder?"

"I do."

The two had come to a halt; the lady's agitation was extreme, but she said:

"I do not know as I have any interest in the tragedy to which you allude."

"Yes, you have, madame."

"Why do you say so?"

"You have betrayed yourself!"

"I have betrayed myself?"

"Yes; but I suspected from the start that you knew something about the murder."

"You proclaim it a murder?"

"Yes."

"Listen. As I live, I know nothing about it!"

"But you are interested in it?"

"I am."

"Good. I am glad you admit so much. Whence comes your interst?"

The woman was silent.

"Come, confide in me."

"Oh, that I could."

"You can."

"You are a detective?"

"I am."

"Who employed you?"

"I will explain later on."

The lady made a startling exclamation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE two stood in the opening dawn on a country road. The sky was beginning to brighten in the east, and surrounding objects were becoming more clearly visible.

"Will you tell me," the woman repeated, "who employed you to investigate the mystery?"

"No one."

"No one?" repeated the lady.

"No one."

"And how did you chance to interest yourself?"

"I have a strange story to tell."

"Tell it to me."

"Not until I hear your story."

"Did you know Mr. Silver?"

"I never saw him to my recollection, dead or alive!"

"You never saw him?"

"Never!"

"You know his history?"

"I do."

"Are you acquainted with any of his friends?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"And no one engaged you to investigate the mystery?"

"No one."

"Oh, that I were sure I could trust you!"

"You can trust me."

"I have an interest in the tragedy."

"I thought so."

"A vital interest."

"Will you explain it?"

A moment the woman was silent, but, at length, she said:

"I will trust you."

"And you will never regret your confidence in case circumstances make it so that you need a friend?"

"I do need a friend."

"Then I will prove myself one on one condition."

"What is the condition?"

"That you are worthy?"

"I am a suffering woman."

"And innocent?"

"I am innocent of any crime."

"You had nothing to do with the murder?"

"You still persist in declaring it a murder?"

"I am satisfied it was a murder."

"I fear you are right."

"But will you tell me your interest in the tragedy?"

"My interest, as I told you, is a vital one."

"Name it."

"*Mr. Silver was my husband!*"

The detective gave a start and ejaculated:

"Aha! I thought so!"

"You thought he was my husband?"

"No; but I thought you had some deep interest in the affair."

"I certainly have."

"We may have no better opportunity; tell me your story."

"It is the old, old story."

"Tell it to me."

The woman remained silent some moments. She appeared lost in deep thought, but at length she said:

"I will trust you, and if you betray me I am lost."

"You need not fear; I will stand by you under all emergencies if, as you state, you are an abused woman."

"I am."

"Let us not lose time; tell me your story."

"I was an orphan. I became a governess. I was traveling in Europe with the family who employed me. We met Mr. Silver. He was a middle-aged man, a bachelor. He fell in love with me and asked me to become his wife. He was a relative of the lady whom I served. She discovered that I had won Mr. Silver's love, and from that moment she became my enemy. I now know that she desired to marry Mr. Silver herself. She was a widow and he was very rich. She slandered me, but Mr. Silver loved me, and proposed a quiet marriage, I was a helpless girl and he was a kind and, as I supposed, good man, and I secretly married him.

"Our marriage was maintained a secret for over a year, and then it became necessary that I should demand an announcement of the fact of our marriage, when to my horror my husband declared that I was not his wife!"

"Ah, you were deceived!" said Manfred.

"No, I was not deceived; my marriage was a valid one. I found the clergyman who married us and secured from him all the necessary proofs that the marriage was legal,

but my husband deserted me, yet sent me a sum of money to maintain myself.

"I lived with my child in France until the infant was three years of age, when it was stolen from me."

"Stolen from you!" ejaculated the detective.

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"I never knew, but I suspected."

"And did you never recover your child?"

"Never."

"Or hear from it?"

"Not until news came of its death."

"The child died?"

"So I was led to believe."

"And you never saw your child again?"

"Never."

The detective became very thoughtful, and murmured:

"This is a wonderful revelation. I have possibly made a wonderful discovery. Proceed, madame," he said.

"I came to America and sought out my husband. I appealed to him to do me justice, and I think he was inclined to relent, but he revealed to me some facts that made me aware that I had been made a victim of a dastardly plot. My honor and integrity as a woman had been assailed. I declared my innocence, and also declared that I could prove my innocence—prove that I had been made the victim of a plot, and my husband said:

"'Prove it and I will do you justice!'

"Alas!" continued the woman, "his declaration was overheard as he repeated it to my enemies, and they determined to prevent my vindication. I was seized and carried off to a private mad-house, where I remained a prisoner for fifteen years; and it is only a few months ago that I managed to make my escape. I fled to the West, until I read an account of my husband's death. I came on to New York, and have paid several visits to C——. During one of those visits, I must have been seen and recognized by one of my old enemies, and for several days the man whom you saw has been upon my track, and I have sought every way to avoid him, and only succeeded to-night through your assistance."

"Yours is indeed the old, old story," said Manfred, "and yet it has certainly remarkable features that make it different from the many experiences of those who have been wronged."

"What I have told you is the truth."

"I believe your story."

"And you will aid me?"

"I will aid you, and I have a most wonderful revelation to make."

"I can anticipate it. Oh, I feel as though I would die!"

"No, you must not die; right shall be done you at last. You say you have all the proofs of your marriage?"

"Yes, and the clergyman who performed the marriage still lives."

"He is an American?"

"No; he is an English clergyman, but he now lives in America."

"You have seen him?"

"I saw him a few days ago."

"And he recognized you?"

"He did, and promised me all the aid in his power."

"Does he know that your husband is dead?"

"Yes, and what is more, he saw and recognized my husband a few weeks previous to his death."

CHAPTER XIII.

"You have been very fortunate in one sense amidst all your misfortunes," said the detective.

"How so?"

"You will have no difficulty in proving your identity as the wife of Mr. Silver."

"Yes; but justice may never be done me."

"You think he has made a will?"

"I do; and what is more, I believe he died a poor man."

"I have reason to believe differently," said our hero.

"As far as the world is concerned he died poor. His estate was mostly personal, and that had been disposed of previous to his death."

"Then there is no reason why your enemies should persecute you further."

"I do not see why they should."

"Does it not strike you that the fact is significant?"

"I have not thought of it."

"Your enemies and his relatives have not come forward to claim his estate or his body?"

"Yes; that is something I do not understand."

"But you have reason to believe that they still persecute you, or rather are disposed to do so?"

"So it would appear."

"And the fact proves something."

"What does it prove?"

"That there is property at stake."

"I care nothing about the property."

"Are you rich?"

"No; but I can earn a living if left to myself."

"And what are your intentions?"

"That depends."

"What were your intentions?"

"It was my intention to return to the West."

"And now?"

The woman trembled and her voice was full of feeling as she said:

"A strange hope has risen in my heart."

"A strange hope?"

"Yes."

"What is the hope?"

"My child may live."

"You have reason to think your child may be alive?"

"Yes."

The woman's agitation had been increased.

"What leads you to hope your child may be living?"

"You have raised the hope."

"I?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You have mistaken me for some one else."

"One word; you still persist in declaring that it was not you whom I met?"

"I swear it!"

A moment the detective was silent, but at length he said:

"Then indeed you have reason to hope."

"Will you tell me about the person you met?"

There was a sad feeling running through the detective's mind. He remembered the blood-stains. He remembered the trunk containing all the wealth.

"You do not answer me."

"I will answer you, but I must think. There is a great mystery in all this."

"Yes, there is a mystery; but tell me about the person you met."

The woman's manner was eager and earnest.

"About three weeks ago I was traveling on the road,

and, strange to relate, there was but one vacant seat in the drawing-room car; and when we reached C—— a lady-passenger, deeply veiled, entered and took the seat; and, what is more singular, is the fact that it was the seat you occupied when I first saw you."

"And the lady?"

"The moment I cast my eyes upon her, I discovered that she was laboring under great excitement."

"Did you see her face?"

"I did."

"And she resembled—"

"You so nearly that even now I am half inclined to believe you are the party I met."

"I swear I am not! Was the lady young?"

"I could not say, but I so judged. I only saw her face for an instant."

"What became of her?"

"She mysteriously diappeared."

"And you have not seen her since?"

"I have not."

"It is mysterious."

"But there is another mystery connected with the meeting."

"Tell me all."

"I hardly dare."

"You hardly dare tell me?"

"That is true."

"Why not?"

The detective did not make an immediate answer.

"Please answer me."

"I will, but we must not come to any hasty conclusion."

It would be impossible to convey any idea of the lady's excitement and agitation. The detective was running several theories through his mind, but despite them all one ghastly theory remained uppermost.

"Tell me all," said the lady.

"Do not insist now, later on I may tell you all with less fear."

"With less fear?"

"Yes."

"What do you fear?"

"I can hardly tell."

"You must tell me all."

"You are satisfied your husband was murdered?"

"I am."

"And I am satisfied the veiled lady I met on the train had been with him at the time of his death."

"No, no; it can not be!" cried the woman.

"It is true."

"But, if all your theories are correct she was his child."

"If you were his wife she was his child."

"And she was with him?"

"Yes."

"And you would suggest that she knew of his death?"

"Yes."

The woman had removed her veil, and her face was ghastly.

"Tell me all!" she murmured.

"It is too horrible."

"What is too horrible?"

"What I have to tell."

The woman bent forward and clasped the detective's arm.

"Speak!" she exclaimed in a hoarse voice.

The detective hesitated.

"Speak!" the lady repeated.

"It is not necessary; listen, we will search for the missing girl."

"Tell me what you suspect."

"I have already said too much."

"*Yes;* you have already said too much; you must tell me all."

"Not now."

"Yes, now; indeed, you have offered a fearful suggestion; you have invited the inference that the daughter was cognizant of her father's death."

"It would so appear."

"And you suggest that he was murdered?"

"I do."

"And the child is a fugitive?"

"So it would appear; and there is to come another strange revelation."

"You need not fear, tell me all; my child, if it be my child, is innocent!"

"It may be that she is innocent," said the detective, "but there were blood-stains on her clothing."

CHAPTER XIV.

AGAIN there followed a moment's silence, broken at length by the lady, who said, in a calm tone:

"Is that all?"

The detective gazed upon her in amazement; and yet, away down in his heart he could not himself believe that the fair girl whom he had met was guilty. Still the circumstances were strange and not easily explained.

"It is strange she should become a fugitive."

"Are you sure she is a fugitive?"

"Facts would so indicate."

"What facts?"

"What has become of her?"

"Like me, she may be pursued."

"By whom?"

"Those who would steal her father's fortune."

"There is something in that."

"It can not be possible that you believe her to be a murderess!"

"We will look facts in the face."

"Yes, we will."

"She had blood-stains upon her clothing!"

"Yes."

"I met her the same night that Mr. Silver was murdered!"

"Yes."

"She was excited!"

"Yes."

"And now—"

"Well, go on."

"Where is she?"

"I have offered an explanation."

"But I have not told you all."

"Do so."

"She had all of Mr. Silver's wealth in her possession!"

The woman became once again greatly excited.

"How do you know?"

"I do know."

"She was entitled to his wealth! She was his child!"

"Madame, I think I see a solution of the mystery."

"And you believe my child a murderess?"

"No."

"What do you believe?"

"I have a strange theory; it has just come to me."

"Name it."

"Your husband must have been aware that his daughter lived."

"Undoubtedly; she must have been under his care and protection all the time."

"He stole her from you?"

"I have always so believed."

"And not his relatives?"

"I have always so believed."

"He lived many years at C——."

"So I have learned."

"His daughter did not live with him."

"But there was a lady once visited him."

"You have learned that fact?"

"Yes."

"And you believe the mysterious visitor was his daughter?"

"Since hearing your story I have reached that conclusion."

"I think you are right; what more do you believe?"

"I have a theory founded on what I have heard from you."

"Tell it to me."

"I repeat, I believe the father stole his own child."

"Yes."

"And I now believe he was conscious all the time of her existence; indeed, she may have been under his direct care."

"Unknown to the enemies of your child?"

"It is possible."

"Proceed."

"At the last moment he may have sent for her."

"It would so appear."

"My enemies may have have had him under the most constant surveillance."

"It would so appear."

"They heard at the last moment of the daughter's existence."

"It would so appear."

"And then?"

"Well?" ejaculated the detective, interrogatively.

"They murdered him!"

"That is my present theory."

"You said she had her father's wealth in her possession?"

"I did."

"How do you know?"

"I made the discovery in the most singular manner."

"Tell me all about it, please."

"When the lady boarded the train she had a trunk."

"Yes."

"She left the train in a most mysterious manner."

"Where?"

"At the New York depot."

"Well?"

"She did not call for her trunk."

"She did not call for her trunk?"

"No."

"How do you know?"

The detective told the circumstances of his discovery of the trunk.

The woman became once again excited and said:

"There comes a terrible suggestion."

"I have thought of that, but somehow I do not entertain it."

"Where, then, can she be?"

"We will find her."

"Why did she not come for her trunk?"

"She may have feared to do so."

"Then it would appear she was friendless."

"It would indeed so appear."

"And in her turn she may have made away with herself."

"I do not believe it."

"You secured possession of the trunk?"

"I did."

"It is in your possession now?"

"Yes."

"Our meeting, sir, is most wonderful."

"Under all the circumstances, yes."

"We will go to New York. I am now in your hands. We will open the trunk. I have the right to open it."

"I have already opened it, madame."

"And you found the will?"

"No."

"What did you find?"

"The fortune."

"The fortune?" repeated the lady.

"Yes."

"I do not understand you."

"My words are plain."

"You say you found the fortune?"

"Yes."

"Deeds?"

"No."

"What?"

"Cash, bonds, and jewels."

The lady uttered an exclamation of amazement, and, after a moment, said:

"One fact is assured."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I can trust you?"

"Certainly you can, madame."

"Did you count over the wealth?"

"I did."

"And the amount?"

"Over a quarter of a million!"

"All in personal effects?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, this all proves the fact!"

"What fact?"

"My daughter's innocence!"

CHAPTER XV.

"How does it establish your daughter's innocence?" demanded the detective.

"I have a theory, but I do not know as I can make it plain."

The conversation continued for some time as the two thus strangely met walked down toward the wharf.

Later on they took passage on the boat for New York, and fortunately were able to secure a good breakfast.

Arriving in New York the detective led the lady to his home, and in due time showed her the trunk.

Mrs. Silver's emotion was great as she gazed upon the trunk and its contents.

"My child is dead," she said.

"I have no such idea," said the detective.

"Through my mind there runs a theory."

"And what is your theory?"

"My child has been murdered."

"What makes you think so?"

"Her mysterious disappearance."

"I have formed an entirely different theory."

"What is your theory?"

"The girl discovered she was being followed and has sought to elude her pursuers."

"Why should she leave this trunk unclaimed?"

"She did not dare claim it, and I will make it my business to find her; in the meantime you must make this your home."

The lady blushed and said:

"I can not do so."

The detective smiled and answered:

"Yes, you can." He touched a bell and a few moments later a plain-looking woman entered the room.

"Mrs. Delmar," said Manfred, "this lady will become your guest for a few days."

"She is welcome," said the plain-looking woman.

Matters were duly arranged and our hero told Mrs. Silver that she must remain within doors until such time as he could make certain inquiries. It was so agreed.

Late on an old man of respectable appearance left the house. He went straight to the freight office and there was the same man on duty who had been haunted by the trunk.

The old gentleman advanced to the counter and asked:

"Have you had a lost trunk here?"

A queer look came over the baggageman's face as he muttered:

"Hang it, I believe it's that same mysterious trunk again."

"What mysterious trunk?" inquired the old man.

"Have you lost a trunk, sir?"

"Yes."

"Will you describe it?"

"It was a large sole-leather trunk."

"And what train did it come by?"

"The Saratoga train."

"When was it shipped?"

"About three days ago."

The baggageman heaved a sigh of relief and muttered:

"Well, it ain't the mystery trunk, after all."

"What do you mean by the mystery trunk, young man?"

"Nothing, sir."

"You must mean something."

"Why, sir?"

"You have made several allusions to a mysterious trunk."

"Well, it was not your trunk, sir."

"No, but I've heard about a mysterious trunk."

"You have, sir?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Within the last few weeks."

"Where, sir?"

"At a baggage-room in Philadelphia."

"What about the trunk, sir?"

"It was a trunk left over and never called for."

"That often happens, sir."

"Yes, but there was something peculiar about this trunk of which I speak."

"What was peculiar about it?"

"The baggageman became very much worked up about it."

"How did it affect him?"

"It haunted him."

The baggageman became deeply interested, and said:

"It haunted him?"

"Yes."

"That is funny, because it is a common thing to have trunks left over."

"Yes, but the baggageman told me there was something very peculiar about the trunk of which I speak. He dreamed about it, and he told me his dream."

"What did he dream?"

"He dreamed there came a voice from the trunk saying: 'Open me, open me!'"

The baggage-master turned pale.

"Did you see the trunk, sir?"

"Yes; he showed it to me."

The baggageman looked at the old man sharply; the latter was a benevolent-looking man, a genuine old fellow, as he appeared.

"What did the trunk look like?"

"It was a small new trunk—looked like a hat-box."

The baggageman became even more deeply interested and actually turned pale.

"Was there a name on the trunk, sir?"

"Only initials."

"Did you see them?"

"Yes."

"What were they?"

"M. M. S."

The baggageman gave a start.

"This is wonderful!" he ejaculated.

"Wonderful?" repeated the old man.

"Yes."

The baggageman studied the face of the old gentleman even more carefully, and at length said:

"I don't understand it, sir."

"Don't understand what?"

"This that you have just told me."

"Well, it was a little peculiar.

"You are giving me guff, sir!"

"Giving you guff?"

"Yes."

"What is 'guff'?"

"Oh, you know what you are talking about."

"Certainly I do; I am not a fool."

"Some one told you about the trunk I had here."

"No, sir; I know nothing about a trunk you had here, save what *you have told me yourself.*"

"I have told you nothing."

"You told me you had a trunk left on your hands."

"When did I tell you so?"

"Just now."

"Did I?"

"Yes."

"And you are not giving me 'guff'?"

"You are making fun of me, young man."

"No, I am not."

"Then what do you mean?"

"I had a trunk here."

"So you said."

"It troubled me."

"Did it?"

"Yes, but it has troubled me a great deal more, since I tell you it is a very mysterious affair. I dreamed about the trunk I had here."

"Let me see it."

"It is gone."

"Gone, eh?"

"Yes."

"Then what are you bothering about?"

"That trunk will get me into trouble yet; but the most mysterious part of it is that you have described the trunk."

"I have described it?"

"Yes."

"How could I describe it?"

"There's the mystery, sir; that is what I do not understand."

CHAPTER XVI.

"It is impossible that I could have described what I never saw!" said our hero.

"You did describe it."

"I described the trunk you have here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that is strange, I will admit."

"And what is more, the trunk I had here was marked the same as the one you saw in Philadelphia."

"How?"

"M. M. S."

"Well, I'll be hanged, this is very strange, or you are giving me what you call 'guff.'"

"I am telling you the truth, sir, absolutely the truth!"

"And you say the trunk was called for?"

"Yes."

"Well, that ought to end it. How can it give you any more trouble?"

"It laid here two weeks and was not called for, but since it has been called for three times."

"It has been called for three times?" ejaculated the detective.

"Yes."

"Well, well, what you tell me is very strange, or you are making sport of me, and it is not to your credit to make sport of an old man."

"I swear I am telling you the truth."

"You have aroused my interest."

"I expect trouble about that trunk. I may be arrested at any moment."

"You may be arrested?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"One of the parties who called for it. He accuses me of having stolen the darned mysterious thing."

"Nonsense."

"It is true."

"Well, young man, if you are arrested call on me."

"What can you do?"

"I will swear I saw the trunk in Philadelphia."

"But how can we prove it was the same trunk?"

"We will let the man describe it, and then I will swear."

"But you will be accused as an accomplice."

"No, I will not."

The old gentleman spoke in a very confident tone.

"No, no," he added; "I am too well known. You need not fear. I will stand by you and go your bail if you are arrested."

"You are very kind, sir."

"I believe in protecting the innocent; but let's hear about the mysterious trunk."

"Well, as I told you it was here two weeks, and had troubled me a great deal; as I said, I dreamed about it, and it haunted me day and night; but one day a veiled lady called and presented the checks for the trunk."

"Well, well."

"She was an old maid; the checks were all right and I delivered the trunk, and I was glad it was claimed. I said to myself I had been a fool to worry about the thing; but what do you think, an hour after the trunk had been delivered a man called and presented the checks for the same trunk!"

"Well, well!" ejaculated the listener.

"I told him the trunk was gone."

"'Gone!' he exclaimed. I said 'yes,' and he said, 'how could you deliver a trunk without the checks?' I said the checks were handed in. He seemed greatly disappointed and worried, and he asked what was the appearance of the party to whom I gave the trunk. I described the party and he said, 'you have been imposed upon or you stole the trunk!' and with that he went away."

"And he had the right checks?"

"Yes."

"Well, well."

"But the strangest thing is to come."

"Indeed."

"Yes; the next day another lady called and claimed the trunk."

"A third party?"

"Yes."

"And she had the checks?"

"Yes, the last party had the genuine checks."

"And it was a lady?"

"Yes."

"Did you see her face?"

"Yes."

"Young or old?"

"A young and beautiful girl, and I am satisfied she was the rightful owner of the trunk."

The disguised detective pretended to be very indifferent, but in fact he was deeply interested.

"She was young and beautiful?"

"Yes."

"And you say she had the genuine checks?"

"Yes."

"How could you make the distinction between her checks and the others?"

"The moment I saw her checks I knew they were the right ones."

"What did you tell her?"

"I told her the trunk had been claimed and delivered."

"What did she say?"

"She did not say anything, but her beautiful face betrayed great distress."

"Did she ask you any questions?"

"Yes; she asked me who got the trunk, and when I said a lady she appeared even more surprised."

"Did you tell her about the man?"

"Yes."

"What did she say then?"

"Well, I tell you her face wore a troubled look all the time, and I told her I would look the matter up."

"Did she say she would come again?"

"Yes."

"Did she come?"

"It was only yesterday she was here."

"And you expect her to-day?"

"Yes; and by George, it's strange there should be so much trouble about that trunk! it's strange, but I stood in awe of the thing the moment I first laid my eyes on it."

"Did the lady say what was in the runk?"

"No."

"Give you no idea of its contents?"

"No."

"Well, I will come and see you again, young man, and if you get into trouble let me know."

"How will I find you, sir?"

The old man gave the baggageman a card with the address at a well-known hotel, and as he did so he said:

"You must look out for my trunk."

"Your trunk never came here, sir."

"It may have been delayed on the road."

"Yes, it may turn up some day."

"If it does, be sure and hold it for me whether any one presents checks or not."

"I will, sir."

The disguised detective went away, seemingly, but in fact he merely went far enough to work a "transform" and returned.

All day and well into the night the detective under a new disguise hung around the baggage-room, but no young lady appeared, and at length Manfred returned to his home.

Mrs. Silver awaited his return.

"Have you made any discoveries?" the lady demanded.

"I have."

Mrs. Silver at once became deeply agitated.

"What have you discovered?"

"Your daughter lives."

"My daughter lives."

"Yes."

"How do you know? What have you discovered?"

"She called for the trunk."

"When?"

"Yesterday."

CHAPTER XVII.

MANFRED related all the circumstances attending his visit to the baggage-room, and Mrs. Silver was deeply interested, and when the detective had concluded she said:

"Our theories are being confirmed."

"Yes."

"Our enemies are seeking the trunk."

"Yes."

"We have it safe."

"Yes."

"Can they trace it to our possession?"

"No; but suppose they did, I would not surrender it."

"Suppose we find my child?"

"We will find her."

"And then?"

"I have a theory. She will be able to prove her right to the trunk and its contents."

"Then why should she hide?"

"She fears her enemies; it is evident she is friendless, but when I find her she will have a powerful friend, and matters will be easily settled."

"We must find her!"

"We will."

"How would it do to advertise?"

"I will; but we must be very guarded lest others interpret our advertisement. Meantime, to-morrow I will work a new lay."

"Oh, but they may find my child."

"I think not."

"How did she come in possession of the trunk, do you think?"

"I think, as you suggested yesterday, she has been under her father's protection all the time, and suspecting danger or contemplating suicide, he sent for her and delivered all his wealth to her."

"And did not make a will?"

"If he did the will must be in your daughter's possession."

"The lawyer who attended to his business says he made a will."

"Yes."

"Do you suppose it is true?"

"Do you know the lawyer?"

"No."

"Never heard of him?"

"Never, until after my husband's death, and all I know I read in the papers or learned during my investigations at C——."

"Do you suspect the lawyer was your husband's friend, or a friend of your enemies?"

"I do not know what to think."

"I have an idea."

"What is *your* idea?"

"The lawyer is in with the other side."

"It is possible; but why should he mention a will and not produce it?"

"It is all part of a conspiracy. He is working a deep game. He will wait to see his way clear, and at the last moment present a forged will."

"It is indeed a deep game."

"They mean to gain this property."

"Yes."

"You say your husband's relative was a widow?"

"Yes."

"You say your husband's relative was a widow?"

"Yes."

"What was her relationship?"

"A cousin."

"Had he other relatives?"

"Not that I ever heard him mention."

"What was the cousin of the widow, his cousin?"

"Mrs. Brownell."

"How much family had she?"

"A son and daughter."

"And the son now would be how old?"

"About thirty."

"And the daughter?"

"About twenty-eight."

"Have you ever seen or heard of Mrs. Brownell since you were in the asylum?"

"Never."

"You do not know whether she is alive now or not?"

"I do not."

"How old would she be if living?"

"About fifty."

"All right; to-morrow I will work on a new 'lay.'"

Upon the following day, bright and early, under an entirely new disguise, the detective appeared at the baggage-room. Some hours passed, when a man entered the baggage-master's office. Manfred recognized the man at a glance. He was the same fellow whom our hero had "dropped out" at the railroad station between C—— and New York.

The detective approached as the man addressed the baggageman.

"Well, sir," said the fellow, "where is my trunk?"

"I told you the other day the trunk had been delivered."

"And you remember what I said to you?"

"I do."

"I shall have you arrested."

"Go ahead and arrest me, and I will make it warm for you, mister!"

"You will make it warm for me?"

"I will."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

The detective had taken up a position where he could overhear all that was said.

"Please explain yourself."

"I will explain soon enough when you have me arrested."

The trunk claimant appeared a little disconcerted, but he said:

"I will have that trunk or make trouble for you!"

"Go ahead and make trouble as soon as you are a mind to, sir, I am ready!"

"See here, my friend, I'd rather be on good terms with you."

"Then don't attempt to threaten me."

"Well, we will consider all threats withdrawn."

"All right."

"I wish to find that trunk, and in order to do so, I must find the party who took it away."

"I guess that is your best plan."

"You must aid me."

"I've had trouble enough about that trunk already. I'll have nothing more to say about it."

"I'll make it worth your while!"

"You will?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Help me to find the party who took the trunk, and I will give you two hundred and fifty dollars."

"You will?"

"I will."

"See here, I might as well out with it."

"Out with what?"

"The truth."

"What is the truth?"

"Your checks are crooked!"

"My checks are crooked?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"They are not the genuine duplicate checks; those checks of yours do not belong to our road."

The man turned pale and appeared very much disconcerted.

"Young man, you are making a grave charge."

"I will stand by it, that's all!"

"We will talk about the checks later on; meantime I wish to find the party who claimed and carried off the trunk."

"I can not aid you."

"Yes, you can."

"I can not."

"Yes, you can."

"How?"

"You can describe the party."

A moment the baggageman was lost in thought, but at length said:

"I won't do it!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THERE followed an awkward silence. The baggageman had spoken in such a determined tone, the questioner appeared to be momentarily nonplused, but after a moment said:

"Yes, you will."

"I will?"

"Yes."

"I reckon not."

"I will make it an object to you."

"You can't make it an object to me."

"I will give you five hundred dollars for information that will lead to the recovery of the trunk."

"I would not take any price. If I could recover the trunk I would return it to the rightful owner."

"Who is the rightful owner?"

The baggageman was about to make an answer, when the detective stepped forward and said:

"Are you the baggage-master?"

"I am."

"I came to inquire about a trunk."

"I suppose you are after the mysterious trunk?" exclaimed the baggageman.

"I am after a lost trunk."

"Can you describe it?"

"Certainly."

"Have you the checks?"

"Yes."

"Let me see them."

"I will produce the checks when I see the trunk."

"What sort of a trunk is it?"

"A small trunk marked M. M. S."

The baggageman uttered an exclamation of impatience, and the man who had been seeking to bribe the baggageman fixed a keen glance on the inquirer.

"There is no such trunk here as you describe."

"It was here?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"Gone."

"Gone, eh?"

"Yes!"

"Who took it?"

"A party who produced the checks."

"The checks were forgeries!"

"Here is a gentleman inquiring for that trunk."

The detective turned and fixed his eyes on the man and asked:

"Inquiring for which trunk?"

"The same one that you are after."

"That can not be, or else there is a mistake somewhere."

"He has checks."

"Can I see your checks, sir?" demanded the detective."

"No, sir!"

"Why not?"

"I don't choose to show them."

"You are looking for a trunk?"

"Yes."

"But it is not probable you and I are looking for the same trunk."

"I am looking for a trunk marked M. M. S."

"Whom do you represent when you seek the trunk?"

"That is none of your business."

"You are very rude."

The detective turned and walked away. He was followed by the man who had been seeking the mysterious trunk.

Manfred had accomplished thus far that which he the most desired. He wanted the man to follow him. Our hero walked along until an opportunity offered when he jumped on a car, and he had not gone far when he discovered that his pursuer was on the same car.

The detective left the car at a convenient point and walked along until he reached Union Square Park. He entered the park and took a seat upon one of the benches, and taking a paper from his pocket put on a pair of glasses and pretended to be reading. A few moments passed and the trunk seeker took a seat alongside of our hero, and after an interval, said:

"I believe you have lost a trunk?"

"Eh?"

"I believe you have lost a trunk."

"That's funny."

"What is funny?"

"That you should accuse me of having lost a trunk."

"I was present when you were inquiring for it."

The detective removed his glasses and fixed his eyes on the man.

"I don't remember ever having seen you before."

"That is all right, and I wish to ask you a few questions."

The detective remained silent.

"You were looking for a trunk marked M. M. S.," continued the man.

"How do you know I was?"

"It's all right, I know you were."

"Well?"

"That trunk does not belong to you?"

"Who said it did?"

"You would have no right to it if you found it."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"You appear to know a great deal that does not concern you!"

"Who are you?" queried the man.

"Who are you?" came the answering question.

"No matter who I am so long as I am prepared to pay well for any information I may receive."

The detective pretended to be deeply interested at once.

"You are willing to pay for information?"

"Yes."

"Why do you state that fact to me?"

"Because I think you can give me the information I seek."

"About what?"

"The missing trunk."

"But I have not found the trunk."

"That is all right; who sent you to search for it?"

"I am not at liberty to tell."

"What is your business?"

"My business is not yours."

"See here, we will come right down to plain talk."

"That is all right, I like plain talk."

"I am looking for a trunk marked M. M. S."

"You are?"

"Yes."

"So am I."

"I know it."

"Well?"

"The trunk can have but one owner."

"That is reasonable."

"It belongs to me."

"So you say."

"If it belongs to me, the party whom you represent has no claim."

"So you say."

"And I'd like to find out who it is that is seeking to gain possession of my property."

"Can you prove it is yours?"

"Yes; I have the checks."

"So have I."

"You have the checks for that trunk?"

"Yes."

"Who gave them to you?"

"A gentleman."

"A gentleman?"

"Yes."

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"I am not bound to tell a stranger."

"I will make it to your interest."

"You will?"

"Yes."

"Do so.

"I will pay you a hundred dollars."

"You will pay me a hundred dollars?"

"Yes."

"For what?"

"For telling me who sent you for that trunk."

"I tell you a gentleman sent me."

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"Do you wish to know?"

"Yes."

"And you will pay me a hundred dollars if I tell you?"

"Yes."

"His name is Silver."

CHAPTER XIX.

At the mention of the name Silver, the man gave utterance to an oath, and he fixed his eyes upon our hero in a keen manner.

"A gentleman by the name of Silver sent you to find the trunk?"

"Yes."

The inquirer appeared greatly bewildered, and exhibited indications of great excitement.

"Where is Mr. Silver?"

"Dead."

Again the man gave a start.

"He is dead?"

"Yes."

"When did he die?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Under what circumstances?"

"It has not been decided."

"It has not been decided?"

"No."

"I do not understand."

The detective smiled in a strange, absent manner and said, in an indifferent tone:

"The coroner said it was a case of suicide."

"A case of suicide?"

"Yes."

"This is a strange thing you are telling me."

"Yes?"

"You speak in a suggestive manner."

"Do I?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You say the coroner says it was a case of suicide?"

"Yes; that is what I said."

"But in a tone that would indicate that you doubt the coroner's verdict!"

"I do."

"What do you think?"

"I think Mr. Silver was murdered."

"You knew him well?"

"No."

"And he sent you for the trunk?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"The day before he was murdered."

The inquirer became more and more bewildered.

"Yours is a strange story," he said.

"Yes; all the facts are strange."

"What are they?"

"Why should I relate them to you?"

"Because I am interested."

"How?"

"Can you not see how?"

"No."

"I have lost a trunk."

"Yes, so you say."

"And you claim to be looking for a trunk?"

"I am."

"We evidently are looking for the same trunk."

"So you say."

"The trunk you describe is the one I am looking for, and also you name the same initial marks."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"That is an incident that certainly entitles me to be interested in the facts connected with your search for the same trunk."

"That may be so."

"It is so; and you will confer a favor by telling me all the facts."

"Did you know Mr. Silver?"

"I did not."

"You have heard of him?"

"I read about a gentleman of that name who committed suicide."

"Who was murdered!"

"You know he was murdered?"

"I have reason to believe he was murdered."

"Do you suspect the assassin?"

"I do."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"I am not a fool."

"How?"

"I will not name a man as a murderer on mere suspicion."

"You say Mr. Silver sent you to search for the trunk the day before he was murdered?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances?"

"I am not bound to tell you."

"I will pay you five hundred dollars if you will tell me."

"It is strange."

"What is strange?"

"That you should offer to pay me five hundred dollars for so trifling a service."

"I will do it."

"No need."

"And you will not tell me?"

"I will tell you; there is no secret about the matter."

"I am glad."

"I received a note to call upon a Mr. Silver. I am a lawyer—"

"Eh? You are a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"Proceed."

"I did not know the gentleman, indeed had never heard of him, but as it appeared to be a business matter I called on him."

"Where did you find him?"

"In a little farm-house at C——."

"Proceed."

"The gentleman told me a strange romantic story."

"What did he tell you?"

"The story has nothing to do with the trunk."

"Well, how about the trunk?"

"After the gentleman had told me his story, which as I said was a strange one, he said further that he had sent a trunk to New York. He gave me the checks of the trunk and said he desired me to secure it, and after I had secured it to open a letter which he gave me, and which he said contained his full instructions."

"Did you open the letter?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I am waiting to secure the trunk first."

"You have the letter?"

"Certainly."

A moment the man was silent, but at length said:

"This is indeed a strange story you tell me."

"Yes; but the gentleman told me a stranger one."

"Have you any idea what you are to do with the trunk?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"I am not at liberty to tell."

"Have you any idea as to the contents of the trunk?"

"Yes."

"What will you find when you open it?"

"I only surmise."

"What do you surmise?"

"I expect to find a will."

"What else?"

"A fortune."

The inquirer appeared to be greatly excited and bewildered. He also showed signs of great nervousness and eagerness.

"You say you are a lawyer?"

"Yes."

"You were a stranger to Mr. Silver?"

"Yes."

"Are you a rich man?"

"That is an impertinent question."

"Possibly not."

"I so consider it."

"Why?"

"The fact is none of your business."

"It may be."

"How?"

"I will make you a rich man if you are not."

"You will make me a rich man?"

"Yes."

"Why will you make me a rich man?"

"Because you can be of service to me."

"I can be of service to you?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You can aid me to obtain possession of the trunk."

"But I do not recognize your interest in the trunk."

"I have an interest in it, sir."

CHAPTER XX.

THERE was an amused look upon the detective's face. He was playing a deep game, and he was gratified with his little scheme as far as he had gone."

"You and I can come to an understanding," said the man.

"What is your name, sir?"

"My name is Stevens."

"Never heard of you, sir."

"And what is your name?"

"My name is O'Grady."

"Never heard of you, Mr. O'Grady."

"We are quits on that score."

"Yes."

"And now, Mr. O'Grady, we can talk plainly."

"I like plain talk."

"I wish to learn more of your adventure with Mr. Silver, my relative."

"Your relative?"

"Yes."

"You told me you did not know him?"

"That was merely a precautionary denial."

"Ah, I see; so Mr. Silver was your relative?"

"Yes."

"What relation were you to him?"

"He was my first cousin."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; and he had no other relatives."

"He had no other relatives?"

"No."

"That is strange."

"It is not strange a man should have only one relative."

"But it is strange he should tell me one thing and you another."

"Did he tell you he had other relatives?"

"Yes, he did."

"What relatives?"

"A wife and a daughter."

"He told you he had a wife and daughter?"

"Yes."

"He told you so?"

"Yes."

"Well, upon my word, I did not know my poor relative had become so crazy as that."

"Was he a crazy man?"

"Yes."

"He did not appear so; and he told me a pretty straight story."

"What story did he tell you?"

"I will give it in outline only."

"Please do."

"He said he was married to a beautiful girl—a governess in a relative's family."

"He told you that?"

"Yes; and he said that after his marriage his relatives managed to separate him from his wife, and that later on a child was born; and still later on he stole his own child."

"He stole his own child!" ejaculated Mr. Stevens.

"Yes."

"Well, he was crazy."

"The story is not true, eh?"

"It is all the fanciful dream of a madman."

"Is that so?"

"Yes."

"Well, as I said, he did not talk like a madman."

"He was as mad as a March hare; but go on with your story."

"He told me his relatives were anxious to secure his fortune."

"Nonsense! he had no fortune."

"If you base your idea of his madness on that ground, you are mistaken."

"How?"

"He did have a fortune."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"He furnished me ample proof."

"And the fortune is in the trunk?"

"I have reason to believe that it is, and the trunk must be found."

"If he was married, why did he not send for his wife?"

"He said he did not know whether she were living or not."

"Did he say when he had last heard from his wife?"

"Yes."

"And when was that?"

"He said the last time he heard from her she was in a lunatic asylum."

The man Stevens turned deadly pale as he muttered, in a hoarse voice:

"He ought to have been there himself."

"I do not think so," said the detective.

"He told you he had a daughter?"

"Yes."

"Where was she?"

"He knew where she was."

"He did, eh?"

"Yes; and he said it was his purpose to have his wife and daughter secure possession of all his wealth."

"Why didn't he send for his daughter?"

"He did."

"He did send for her?"

"Yes."

"Did she come to him?"

"He expected her that day."

"He did!" exclaimed Stevens, in an agitated tone.

"Yes."

"Did she come?"

"I think she did."

"But how about the trunk?"

"I was to secure the trunk and hold it for his daughter."

"How would you know his daughter?"

"That was all arranged, and she was to come to me."

"Did she come?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I do not know."

"And you did not secure the trunk?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I was called away the day it was to be secured, and when I came back the trunk was gone."

"And you expect me to believe this story?"

"No."

"Then why did you tell it?"

"Because you asked me to tell it."

"And you do not expect me to believe it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Simply because I do not care whether you believe it or not."

"And you have not found the daughter?"

"I have not."

"You expect to find her?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"In good time."

"How about the wife?"

"She is living."

"She is living?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen her?"

"Yes."

"She is still in the asylum?"

"No."

"Where is she?"

"Safe."

"How did she get out of the asylum?"

"I got her out."

"And this woman represents herself as Mr. Silver's wife?"

"Yes."

"It is a deep conspiracy."

"Is it?"

"Yes."

"I think not."

"You don't know all the facts."

"I know enough, and I have the proofs that the lady was Mr. Silver's wife and is his widow."

"You have the proofs?"

"Yes."

"Who furnished them?"

"Mr. Silver." Here followed a moment's silence, broken at length by Mr. Stevens, who said:

"This is a grand scheme of robbery."

"Yes," answered the detective, quietly, "I think it is."

Mrs. Silver's emotion was great as she gazed upon the trunk and its contents.

CHAPTER XXI.

THERE followed the usual silence that succeeds, as a rule, an ambiguous remark, and it was Mr. Stevens who broke the silence with the inquiry:

"You are a lawyer?"

"So I informed you."

"And you are engaged in this case?"

"I am."

"What pay are you to receive?"

"That is my business."

"I will double your pay, whatever it may be."

"You will double my pay?"

"Yes."

"And for what service?"

"You are to enter my service."

"I am to enter your service?"

"Yes."

"What can I do for you?"

"You must know."

"I do not."

"You can help me to defeat a big conspiracy."

"Who is engaged in the conspiracy?"

"The woman who calls herself Mrs. Silver."

"She is engaged in a conspiracy, eh?"

"She is."

"And who is aiding her?"

"Some creature whom she has secured to represent herself as Mrs. Silver's daughter."

"That is your idea."

"I know that to be the fact."

"Convince me that you tell the truth, and I surrender the case."

"I can convince you."

"Do so and I surrender the case."

"I will convince you in good time."

"If you do, I will keep my word."

"And desert the case?"

"Yes."

"And enter my service?"

"Possibly, yes."

"Mr. O'Grady, I will see you later on."

"Very well."

"I will meet you to-night."

"Very well."

"I will meet you in the reading-room of the —— Hotel."

"At what hour?"

"Ten o'clock."

"I will be there."

Mr. Stevens went away, and the detective pretended to resume his paper, but after a moment he rose and sauntered away, and, watching for an opportunity, wrought a transform, and started to follow the man Stevens. He followed the fellow down-town, and saw him enter a large office building, and traced him to an office.

The detective entered an adjoining office; it was occupied by a seedy-looking old man.

"Are you a lawyer?"

"I am."

The detective pretended to be very much excited.

"I wish to engage your services, sir."

"I am ready to enter your service."

"Good! We have not a moment to spare. Go to the —— Hotel. Ask for Mrs. ——. She has some papers for you to sign. When the papers are signed, hasten back here. And—hold! here are twenty dollars. You must not ask the lady for any money, or accept any from her."

"I understand."

"You will hasten?"

"I will. Where will I find you?"

"I can wait for you here."

"All right, sir; I will go at once."

The old lawyer seized his hat and cane and hurried out, a happy man. It had been a long time since he had earned a twenty-dollar bill, and he did not stop to ask any questions.

The moment the old lawyer was gone, our hero indulged a light laugh of satisfaction, and crossing the room, put his ear to the door of the adjoining room.

He overheard some strange revelations and some singular disclosures that will be detailed as our narrative advances.

An hour passed, and the old lawyer returned.

"Ah, you here?"

"Yes."

"Why did you send me on a fool's errand?"

"A fool's errand, sir?"

"Yes."

"I reckon you are no fool."

"I went to the hotel, and was informed that no such lady as you named was stopping there."

"But you got the name wrong."

"No, sir; you gave the name of ——."

"Yes."

"It was that name I presented."

"And they told you she did not reside in the house?"

"Yes."

"My friend, this is very strange."

"You must have been deceived yourself, sir."

"Must have been deceived, when I just left the hotel and the lady to come here?"

"The what hotel?" demanded the old lawyer.

The detective mentioned the name of a different hotel from the one he had given to the old lawyer.

"The —— Hotel?" exclaimed the lawyer.

"Yes."

"You told me the —— Hotel."

"No, no; did you go there?"

"I did."

"Hang it, you went to the wrong hotel!"

"I went to the hotel you named."

"No, you must have misunderstood me."

"I will go to the other hotel."

"No, it is too late; the lady has left town by this time, and your blunder will cause me considerable inconvenience; but it can not be helped now."

"The mistake was not mine, sir."

"We will not argue that question; you can keep the money, and I will come and see you to-morrow. I may have a good case for you."

The detective departed. He had carried out his scheme and was well satisfied.

Our hero went to his home and held a consultation with Mrs. Silver, and later on proceeded to the hotel where he was to meet Mr. Stevens.

The latter was there in advance.

"You have come?"

"Yes, sir, I am here."

"Will you accompany me?"

"I will."

The two men left the hotel together, and as they proceeded along Mr. Stevens said:

"I propose to convince you that you are being imposed upon."

"I am prepared to be convinced."

The pair reached a private house situated in a good neighborhood, and our hero was led into an elegantly furnished parlor.

"You will wait here, sir."

A few moments passed, and a lady entered the room. The gas had been turned up and the moment the detective's eyes fell upon the lady he felt a thrill go through his frame. The detective had seen a photograph of Mr. Silver, the latter was in the possession of the dead man's wife. Manfred had desired to see the picture in order to aid himself in carrying out his scheme, and the moment his eyes fell upon the young lady that entered the room he was struck by a remarkable resemblance that she bore to the dead man's picture.

"You are Mr. O'Grady?" said the young lady, in a sweet voice.

"That is my name."

"I am glad to meet you, sir."

"And whom have I the pleasure of meeting?"

"A wronged lady!"

"A wronged lady?"

"Yes."

"Who has wronged you?"

"Two designing women; and you are aiding them."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE detective was taken all aback; there was something strange and singular, and indeed startling, in his meeting with the young lady who in such a remarkable manner bore such a striking resemblance to the picture of Mrs. Silver.

"Will you please answer me directly who you are?"

"I am Miss May Silver."

"You are Miss May Silver?"

"I am."

"The daughter of the Mr. Silver who died a few weeks ago?"

"Yes, sir."

"When did you see your father last in life?"

"A year ago."

"Why were you not with him at the time of his death?"

"I have been away."

"Where?"

"In Europe, at my father's command."

"And when did you return home?"

"Since my father's death."

"And what are your initials?"

"M. M. S. Mary Martin Silver."

A strange look shone in the detective's eyes.

"Let me see," he said, "those are the initials that were on the trunk?"

The lady colored.

"Yes, I lost my trunk."

"You lost your trunk?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Since my return."

The detective was puzzled. He held a long talk with the young lady, and she told him a straight story in every

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particular, save that she had made a contradictory statement concerning the trunk.

Our hero closed his interview with the lady, and was joined by Mr. Stevens. The two men left the house in company.

"Well, what do you think now, sir?"

"This is a very remarkable state of affairs."

"How so?"

"In several ways."

"It is straight enough, sir."

"No, no!"

"What is crooked?"

"So many lies are told!"

"So many lies are told?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"Yourself and the young lady who calls herself Miss Silver."

"What lies have I told?"

"You said you were Mr. Silver's only relative."

The man laughed, and answered:

"I did."

"It was a lie."

"A precautionary lie, sir."

"Ah! I see!"

"The young lady told me she had returned to New York from Europe since her father's death."

"Well?"

"She also said she owned the missing turnk.'

"Ah that is correct."

"How could she check the trunk when she was in Europe?"

"She did not check the trunk."

"Who did?"

"Evidently the fraud who is passing herself off as the daughter of Mr. Silver."

"Is Mrs. Silver living?"

"No."

"How long has she been dead?"

"Many years."

"This matter is being much mixed, sir."

"You do not doubt the identity of the young lady whom you just saw?"

"I will not say; I must think the matter over."

"Will you see me to-morrow?"

"I will."

The two men separated, and the detective started to go to his home. He had not proceeded far when he discovered that two men were dogging his steps.

"Aha," he muttered, "that game has commenced, and it goes far toward settling certain doubts in my mind; but I will see what these men are up to. They have some design, that is evident."

The detective was proceeding along in a leisurely manner through a side street, when suddenly he heard rapid steps behind him; the two men were approaching, and upon overtaking our hero one of them said:

"One moment, sir."

The detective came to a halt, and the two men peered in his face, and one said to the other:

"This is our man."

As the fellow spoke, both men sprung upon the detective.

Manfred was not a large man, but he possessed extraordinary strength and agility; indeed, he was an expert gymnast. He was prepared for the assault of the two men, and managed with the aid of a club to down them both, when he rapidly walked away. He had gone a little over a square, when he heard words passing between two persons, but he could not at the moment discover where the two talkers were. He stopped and listened, and discovered that the voices came from the area-way of the house before which he had halted. It was certain words that had been spoken that arrested his attention. He overheard one of the speakers say, "The trunk is lost—some one claimed it, and carried it away."

It was the trunk mystery and the mystery of its owner that was on the detective's mind, and he stepped through the open gate and advanced to the area opening where two females were standing.

"Can you tell me," said the detective, "if Miss Silver is boarding or stopping in this house?"

The detective's question was greeted with a scream; the two females dodged inside the open door of the house, and closed it behind them.

The amazed detective stood there in the darkness, his question unanswered. He waited a few moments and walked out and took a survey of the house and its surroundings; it was an ordinary three-story brick house, one in a row of similar houses.

Our hero looked up at the windows. It was well on toward midnight, and all the lights in the house appeared to be extinguished.

"Well," muttered our hero, "this is an odd state of affairs. I will swear I heard the words 'The trunk is lost,' and when I inquired for Miss Silver those girls ran into the house. I reckon I've tumbled to a clew."

The detective remained in the vicinity of the house for an hour, but there came no signs of any one's entering or leaving it, and at length he proceeded on to his own home.

As he walked along, he indulged in considerable thinking, and muttered:

"Matters are becoming very much mixed. It may be that they are all frauds, and yet I have possession of the trunk and the money!"

When the detective reached his home, he found the so-called Mrs. Silver awaiting his return.

The woman was anxious and nervous, and her face wore a care-worn look.

"What have you to report?" she said.

"I have been the victim in a number of strange and singular adventures," was the answer.

"Have you found my child?"

"I have found a lady who claims to be the daughter of Mr. Silver."

"You have found a lady who claims to be the daughter of Mr. Silver?" repeated the lady.

"Yes."

"Take me to her at once."

"No, no; I met her under remarkable circumstances. Let me first ask you a few questions. You had but one daughter?"

"But one."

"You have not seen her since she was three years of age?"

"I have not."

"Madame, the mystery is becoming even more clouded than ever."

"How so?"

"The lady I saw to-night bears a striking resemblance to your dead husband."

CHAPTER XXIII.

When the self-styled Mrs. Silver heard the declaration that concludes our preceding chapter, a pallor overspread her face, and a thrill shot through Manfred's heart. The

question arose, why should the woman turn pale at the mention of the fact that there was a lady who resembled her dead husband?

"What do you think of my statement, madame?"

"I do not know what to think of it. You say she bears a striking resemblance to my dead husband?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever see Mr. Silver?"

"No; but you will remember I have seen his photograph, and that makes the resemblance even more remarkable."

"I do not understand it; there is some mystery here, as you say."

"The lady whom I met, and whom you claim is Mr. Silver's daughter, resembles you?"

"Yes; she is my child, I am assured, and consequently the child and heir of Mr. Silver. Who this other is, I can not perceive; but one fact is certain; were she in any way legitimately entitled to my late husband's fortune, she would not take illegitimate means to gain possession of it."

"We have no proof that she is taking illegitimate means to gain it."

"We know that the man who is aiding her is a villain!"

"How do we know it?"

"You said so."

"Well, we will see further. I shall investigate this matter clear through."

"One thing is certain; if the girl whom you met is my daughter, she is also the daughter of Mr. Silver, and his heir, even though he married another. Such a marriage would have been illegal, so long as I lived."

Upon the following morning the detective returned to the house where he had overheard the allusion to a missing trunk, and he placed the house under surveillance.

Some hours passed and a veiled lady left the house, and the detective started to trail her. She walked up toward Broadway and turning down the latter street was joined from one of the hotels by a man, and the two walked on together.

Manfred, as our old time readers know, was a man possessed of very delicate features, and it was one of his favorite rôles to assume the disguise of a lady. He saw the parties he was following enter a well-known restaurant and he at once resolved to adopt a very novel disguise.

He hastened to his own home, which, fortunately, was not far distant, and twenty minutes later a lady, veiled, and possessed of a graceful carriage, and well-dressed, entered a well-known restaurant.

The lady glanced around as she entered, and espying a couple seated in a far corner of the room, she proceeded and took a seat near them. The latter parties were engrossed in conversation and did not at the moment observe her approach.

The man was young and quite handsome, although his face possessed a sinister cast. The lady had not removed her veil, so our hero did not at the moment catch a glimpse of her face.

Manfred, under the cover of the veil, was enabled to adjust a little sounding instrument to his ear, a remarkably ingenious contrivance of his own invention and construction. Under favorable circumstances the instrument was a splendid conductor of sound, and upon this occasion circumstances were favorable, and our hero was listener to a very remarkable dialogue. He overheard the man say:

"Since this girl has turned up, matters look rather black for us."

"The girl stands in our way."

"She does, and your skillful mother, I fear, will not be able to play a winning game."

Manfred's heart sunk; those few words had opened up to him a most startling revelation. He at once concluded that he had fallen to the trail of the veiled girl whom he had met upon the train, and it opened up the possibility that after all he was being played by a pair of sharp adventuresses; then again there were other remarkable incidents pointing in another direction.

Meantime the conversation continued. The woman said:

"If we fail to secure that fortune, we are lost, and it is hard to lose it after so many years; it belongs to us, and it is only accident that makes it possible for another to claim it."

"There is but one way for us to secure the fortune; we must adopt desperate remedies."

"What remedies can we adopt?"

"We must secure possession of the girl and her mother."

"Eh! what does this mean?" thought the detective.

"Do you think it possible for us to secure possession of the girl?"

"Yes; but there is one fact in our way."

"What is that?"

"They have secured a smart man on their side, a lawyer."

"You mean Mr. O'Grady?"

"Yes."

"The man who visited me?"

"Yes."

"Well, well," thought the detective.

He had indeed caught on to an important revelation; an admission had come which settled matters; and forever all doubt as to the genuineness of the claims of the lady who was his guest and of the girl whom he met on the train that fateful night, was settled in his mind.

Our hero came to the conclusion that the veiled lady to whom he was listening was the same girl whom he had been introduced to by the man Stevens, and he at last had positive proof of the fact that, despite her singular resemblance, she was illegitimately scheming to secure a fortune; indeed, she had admitted the righteousness of another's claim, while at the same time pronouncing it accidental.

"The whole chance rests upon finding the girl."

"Yes."

"But this lawyer?"

"We will try and secure him, too; but the fact is, there is a mystery about him."

"What is the mystery about him?"

"We can not learn anything concerning his antecedents, and he is a wonderfully deep and cute man. He told Stevens an ingenious story; but we know the story to be false."

"You might expect he would tell a false tale."

"Yes; but his having told it proves that he knew Stevens at the time he told it; there is a deep counter-game against us, and besides, there is something very mysterious about that trunk."

"How did Stevens find out about the trunk?"

"He found the man at C——, who carried it to the depot, and he followed up the clew and learned the check number. He then had duplicates made, and presented them, but the trunk had been taken away."

"It was a pity we did not work that scheme sooner."

"Ah, there is where we made our mistake!"

"What do you think was in the trunk?"

"We think now the whole fortune was in the trunk."

"And there we lose a cool million."
"So it appears now."
"And who has the trunk?"
"That is a matter we can not trace."
"Do you think the girl has it?"
"No."
"Who can have it? the mother?"
"It does not seem possible that the mother can have it."
"Then who could have secured it?"
"Ah, there is the mystery!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE parties held some further conversation, and having finished their meal left the restaurant. The detective also managed to conclude his meal, and followed them out. The pair walked up Broadway to the corner of the street where the house was located from which the veiled lady had come, and they parted.

The gentleman sauntered along up Broadway, and the detective followed.

Manfred had determined to have a little fun; the detective was much of an amateur, after all, and he did enjoy good sport. He had not had a chance as yet to display or exercise his wonderful vocal gifts, and he made up his mind to make the man his victim.

The man favored his scheme as he took a car and rode to Central Park, and arriving at the park he made inquiries of a policeman which our hero overheard and which indicated that the man expected to meet some one.

The man walked along to a secluded spot and seated himself upon a bench, and our hero made up his mind to work his game and enjoy the sport.

Suddenly Manfred ran toward the man and right before him appeared to totter and fall.

The man leaped to the pretended lady's assistance, and our hero seemed to swoon and tremble like an aspen-leaf.

The man led her to a seat, and she sighed and revived just as he was going for water to bathe her temples. When she revived she caught hold of him in a convulsive manner and appeared to be laboring under great mental excitement.

"What is the matter, miss?" demanded the gentleman.
"Oh, dear! am I safe?"
"Yes, you are safe."
"Did he follow me?"
"Who, miss?"
"A man—a man with a wicked face—a wicked man!"
"I have seen no man, and you need not fear. Should any man come, I will protect you."

There was an incredulous expression passing over the gentleman's face. He was an old bird. A suspicion crossed his mind that he was being "played." He liked an adventure, however, and fully conscious of his own shrewdness, determined to let the game go on.

"Oh, I am so really unfortunate!" murmured the lady.
"You are unfortunate, miss?"
"Yes."
"Can I be of any service to you?"

The gentleman thought he would help her along.

"You are very kind, but you can not be of any service to me."
"Can I not aid you in any way?"
"No one can aid me."
"Why not?"
"Oh, dear! I can not explain."
"You can not explain?"
"No."
"Why not?"
"Mine is such a strange history."
"I would like to be of service to you."
"No one can be of service to me in one direction; but tell me, you are sure no man followed me when I came rushing here?"
"I saw no man; but why should a man pursue you?"
"Yes, yes; why should a man pursue me?" repeated the pretended girl. "I have committed no crime."
"The man may mean you harm?"
"He does," came the answer, in a husky voice and dramatic manner.
"What harm does he mean you?"

The girl looked around in a fearful manner, and said:

"He means to—oh, I can not speak it!"
"Yes, yes, tell me."
"You may be his confederate. It does seem as though every one turns against me."
"I will never turn against you. Let me see your face."
"No; you must not see my face! No one must see my face!"
"Why not?"
"They would betray me!"

A second suspicion flashed through the man's mind.

"They would betray you?"
"Yes."
"I will never betray you."
"Ah, you do not know."
"I do know that under no circumstances would I betray you!"
"Are you sure?"
"Yes, I am sure."
"I dare not let you see my face; but oh, why should I be pursued?"
"What do you fear?"
"The man means to—to—to—kill me!"
"Kill you, miss?"
"Yes; he would kill me and throw my body into the lake!"

The gentleman was fully convinced that he was talking to a lunatic; but later on he heard words that caused him to change his mind, words that came to him as a startling revelation.

In a soothing tone he said:

"You need not fear; no one shall kill you."
"Will you protect me?"
"Yes; I will protect you."
"Oh, sir, how I have suffered, and how I have been pursued."
"Tell me your story?"
"Oh, I dare not tell you my story!"
"If you need a friend, tell me your story."
"I dare not."
"Why not?"
"You would not believe it; my tale is too wonderful for one to believe, but that I should become the victim of such a strange mistake!"
"Miss, tell me your story and I may be of service to you."
"Let me see," murmured the disguised Manfred, "I think I've seen your face before."
"You have seen my face before?"
"Yes."
"When and where?"
"This very day."
"You saw my face before this very day?"
"Yes."

"I think not."

"Yes, yes; and you have a good, kind face. I remember I thought so when I first beheld it, and it is strange I should meet you again under such singular circumstances; but I dare not tell you my story."

The man was becoming bewildered, the veiled lady talked in such an incoherent manner; and yet his curiosity was aroused, and he became more and more anxious to hear her strange story.

"Will you tell me where you saw me?"

"Oh, I know I saw you."

"I must doubt the accuracy of your memory, unless you tell me where you saw me."

"I saw you this morning."

"Where?"

"You were with a lady veiled as I am veiled."

"Yes, I was with a lady."

"Who is that lady?" demanded the disguised Manfred."

"My sister," said the man.

"No, it is not your sister."

"Ah, you doubt my word?"

"Yes, I do."

"Why should you?"

"Oh, I remember now, I am afraid of you."

"You are afraid of me?"

"Yes, I am."

The gentleman was at length fully convinced that he was talking to a lunatic.

"Why should you be afraid of me?" he demanded.

"Because you were talking about a missing trunk," came the startling answer.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE man gave a start, and exclaimed:

"Because we were talking about a missing trunk?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I sat near you and overheard all you said."

The man for an instant appeared to be completely upset; indeed, he was bewildered.

"What concern can you have in a missing trunk?"

"Oh, that I could tell you," said the detective.

"Why do you not tell me?"

"I dare not."

"Why not?"

"You would murder me."

"I would murder you?"

"Yes."

"My dear young lady, will you excuse me if I speak plainly?"

"Certainly."

"You will not be offended?"

"Certainly not."

"I believe you are crazy."

"I am not crazy. I know just what I am saying. I am in such trouble, however, and all about a trunk."

"You are in trouble, and all about a trunk?"

"Yes."

"What is your trouble about a trunk?"

"Ah, that I dare tell you."

"You must tell me."

"You look like a good, true man."

"I am a good, true man."

"And yet if I were to tell you about the trunk you would not believe my story."

"I promise I will believe anything you say.'

"Then you might kill me!"

"Why should I kill you?"

"Oh, I have been haunted ever since the fatal mistake!"

"What fatal mistake, miss?"

"Since the fatal mistake when that trunk came into my possession."

The man showed signs of great excitement, and his voice trembled as he asked:

"Have you got possession of a trunk by mistake?"

"Oh, I dare not tell you!"

"You must tell me!"

The man seized the veiled lady's arm.

"I dare not tell you!"

"But you must!"

"There, there! see, the moment I mention the trunk, how violent you become! That trunk is bewitched, and the mention of its existence bewitches every one else! And I've been pursued and hunted ever since it was delivered to me by mistake!"

"Miss, are you honest?"

"Yes, I am honest."

"And have you a trunk in your possession that does not belong to you?"

"I have."

"Why do you not seek the right owner?"

"I will seek the right owner."

"Why are you so secret?"

"Ah, if you knew all, you would see how I must be careful! Yes, yes, I must be careful!"

"Tell me your story."

"I dare not?"

"You dare not?"

"No."

"You must!"

"You would not believe my story."

"Yes, I will believe your story."

"But I must only tell my story when I find the right owner."

"The right owner?"

"Yes."

"How can you find the right owner if you remain silent?"

"Oh, I will find her."

"It belongs to a lady?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"I know."

"How?"

"That is my secret."

"Will you describe this mysterious trunk?"

Manfred described the trunk, and the man became greatly excited.

"See, see," she exclaimed, "how excited you are becoming! Oh, what shall I do? When shall I find the poor girl to whom the trunk belongs and be relieved of this terrible responsibility?"

"How is it such a terrible responsibility?"

"It is a terrible responsibility."

"Miss, that trunk must be surrendered!"

"Certainly, when I find the right owner."

"You say you saw me before to-day?"

"Yes."

"In a restaurant?"

"Yes."

"I was talking to a lady?"

"Yes."

"We were talking about a missing trunk?"

"Yes."

"You have described the trunk that we have lost; it is the property of the lady you saw talking to me."

"I have described the trunk?"

"Yes; described it accurately."

"Oh, dear; oh, dear," murmured Manfred, "what shall I do?"

"There is but one thing for you to do."

"What is that?"

"Surrender the trunk."

"But the trunk does not belong to you."

"It does, and I shall summon a policeman unless you lead me at once to where the trunk is."

"No, no, you will not do that."

"I will."

"You will not when I tell you something."

"What will you tell me?"

"You have made the same mistake that others have made."

"Made a mistake?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You have proved that you are not honest."

"I swear you have described the missing trunk."

"That is what they all say."

"But I can prove it."

"Prove that I have described the missing trunk?"

"Yes."

"*Your* missing trunk?"

"Yes."

"Then that settles it."

"Settles what?"

"That I have not your trunk in my possession. No, no, you are all after the treasure."

"Treasure!" ejaculated the man.

"Yes."

"There is treasure in the trunk?"

"Ah, it is as I told you; it is not your trunk or you would know what was in it; and what is more, I did not describe the trunk."

"What do you mean?"

"Every one claims it; so the first time I do not describe the trunk. I have described a dozen different trunks, and they all say that is mine, that is mine. I have not really described the trunk in my possession to any one, and its possession will drive me mad."

A moment the man was silent and thoughtful. He would have concluded that he had been led into a trap but for one fact. Manfred had really described the little new trunk in the most accurate manner.

"Miss, will you listen to a proposition?"

"I will."

"Are you anxious to restore that trunk to the rightful owner?"

"I am."

"And when you find the rightful owner, will you restore it?"

"I will."

"And will you tell me under what circumstances you came in possession of the trunk?"

"On one condition."

"Name your condition."

"Tell me about the young lady who was with you this morning."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE man hesitated a moment, and then said:

"There is no mystery about the young lady."

"If there is no mystery about her, why should you hesitate to tell me about her?"

"It is strange you should be so anxious to know about the young lady."

"No, it is not strange. I am seeking the owner of the trunk."

"The young lady is the young lady I am to marry."

"And she lost a trunk?"

"Yes."

"Under what circumstances?"

"She shipped her trunk at C——, New York, on the Hudson."

"When?"

"About three weeks ago."

"Will you describe the trunk?"

"Yes."

"Do so."

"It was a little new trunk."

"And had it any marks on it?"

"Yes."

"What are the marks?"

"It is marked Miss M. M. S."

"And it is a little new trunk?"

"Yes."

"You are describing the trunk I described to you."

"I am describing the lost trunk."

"You are sure?"

"Certainly."

"I described a fictitious trunk."

"Miss, let me see your face," said the young man.

"You can not see my face."

"Why not?"

"I have my own reasons."

"I must see your face."

"You must?"

"Yes."

"There, you are like every one else, becoming violent."

"I have reason to become violent; you have the property of my friend in your possession."

"Let me see, you say the trunk belongs to a young lady?"

"Yes."

"The young lady who was with you this morning?"

"Yes."

"I advertised the trunk."

"You did?"

"I did."

"Well?"

"I had several answers, and among them there was a young lady, and I really believe she is the rightful owner of the trunk; but she must furnish me proof."

"Who does the lady claim to be?"

"Miss M. M. S."

"And what name do the initials represent?"

"Mary Martin Silver."

The man let an oath fall from his lips. For some moments he was lost in deep thought, and the detective said:

"I must go."

"No; you shall not go."

"Why not?"

"You possess the property of my friend; but answer me; you say a young lady claims the trunk?"

"Yes."

"And she claims to be Miss Mary Martin Silver?"

"Yes."

"This statement is very strange. Who can the woman be?"

"I believe her to be Mary Martin Silver."

"She is not!"

"She is not?"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"I know the real Mary Martin Silver."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Where is she?"

"She is the lady who was with me this morning."

"I can not believe you."

"But I can prove it."

"Can Miss Silver, whom you know, describe the contents of the trunk?"

"Yes."

"If she does, she shall have it."

"Will you go with me to her house?"

"What for?"

"She shall describe to you the contents of the trunk."

A moment the detective appeared to be lost in deep thought, but at length he said:

"It is useless for me to go."

"Why?"

"You intend treachery."

"Nonsense! Why do you suspect treachery?"

"I have met with so much of it. I will not go to your house, but you can bring the young lady to where I have the trunk."

The man uttered an exclamation of exultation. The exclamation came involuntarily, as he said:

"That is just and right, and proves you are honest."

"Certainly I am honest; but I have not told you the strangest part of my story. There is a horror connected with the trunk."

"A horror?"

"Yes."

"What horror?"

"There is a voice comes from the trunk."

The man gazed in amazement, and after a moment exclaimed:

"This is all a farce!"

"We will so call it, and I will bid you good-day.

"No, you shall not bid me good-day; you have promised to show the trunk."

"But you have said it was all a farce."

"Certainly, the voice part."

"It is not a farce to me; you shall go with me alone and see the trunk, and then you shall decide whether or not you dare bring the young lady to see it."

"I wish to ask you one question: were you really pursued by a man when you came running here?"

"I was."

"What has become of the man?"

"I do not know."

"Why did he pursue you?"

"He was one of the parties who answered the advertisement concerning the trunk."

"Will you take me to see the trunk?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"I will meet you to-night."

"Why not take me there now?"

"I can not go now."

"Why not?"

"I have my reasons."

"And you will meet me to-night?"

"Yes."

"And take me to see the trunk?"

"Yes; on one condition."

"What is your condition?"

"You must not say anything about the affair to any one until after you have seen the trunk."

"I will promise."

"And you will meet me to-night?"

"Yes; at what hour?"

"Eleven o'clock."

"Why at that hour?"

"The voice from the trunk is only heard at midnight; and, now mark me, I shall know whether or not you keep your word. This trunk is one of the greatest mysteries ever revealed, and you will meet with some startling adventures to-night."

"I am prepared to encounter any adventures."

"You will know the trunk when you see it?"

"Yes."

"And you will feel the right to claim it?"

"Yes."

"Very well; you must take the responsibility; you have no idea, however, what you must go through."

"I tell you I am prepared to face all perils in the cause of right."

"You will run great risk unless you are right."

"Where will I meet you?"

The detective named a place of meeting.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"I WILL leave you now," said our hero.

"You will surely meet me?"

"Yes; but remember you must not follow me when I go from here."

"What makes you think I will follow you?"

"I have been pursued so often before."

"By whom?"

"By every one to whom I revealed the possession of the trunk."

"I will not follow until after I learn whether or not you meet me. If you do not meet me, I shall proceed."

"And what will you do?"

"I shall put officers on your track and arrest you!"

"Do not threaten me."

"I do not mean to threaten you, but I can prove ownership of the trunk, and I am determined to gain possession of it!"

"Again I warn you!"

"Against what?"

"Not to follow me. If you do, you certainly will have reason to regret it."

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"You would not believe me."

"I will."

"I can not tell you now; I will some other time; meantime, you must heed my warning. I tell you there is something terrible in the possession of that trunk. Its owner was murdered!"

"Its owner was murdered?"

"The original owner."

"How do you know?"

"You will learn to-night how I know. Good-bye now."

The detective glided away.

The man with whom our hero had been talking was the most mystified man that ever ran into the midst of a strange adventure. Meantime, our hero, the detective, had

no real purpose in all this mystification, save that he was indulging a singular love for availing himself of his mystical powers. He was, as has been intimated, a man possessed of strange occult powers, and, as our readers will learn, he was also capable of performing most wonderful feats. He was a marvelous man.

Manfred had proceeded but a short distance when he learned that the man whom he had mystified had broken his word; the man had promised not to pursue, but had commenced an immediate pursuit, and what was more, he proved that he was an adept himself, as he had worked a transform, a complete change in his appearance.

The detective did not care, however; he expected the man to pursue him. Indeed, he desired him to do so; it was a part of his game to have the man follow him, and he resolved to have heaps of fun and mystify the fellow even more thoroughly than he had done.

As stated, the man was deeply mystified. He was no fool. He was satisfied that a deep game was being played, and he had set out to play a counter game; indeed, he was not as simple and innocent as he pretended to be by half.

Of one fact the man was assured: he felt satisfied in his own mind that the veiled lady had met him by design. He was furthermore satisfied that he and his companion of the morning had been tracked, and he looked upon the woman whom he had met so strangely in the park as a schemer, who was working a trick under instructions.

Meantime Manfred was preparing to work his little game. Our hero also well understood just what the man thought, discerned just what the fellow would do, and he did not mind. He had started out for fun, but later on had laid out a plan with a deep purpose.

The change his pursuer had wrought in his appearance was complete; but the detective having once marked the fellow's "points," would have recognized him in a second under any disguise or sudden transform.

Our hero took a car and rode down-town, and the man kept close upon his heels. The detective entered a large office building, and as he did so, he saw the man hastening toward it. Manfred dodged into a dark passage, and quick as a wink worked a transform. The woman disappeared, and a fine-looking man with a satchel in his hand appeared in place of the female.

The transform was worked in a minute, and our hero saw his pursuer enter the building and gaze around.

The change had been wrought so quickly Manfred was prepared to meet the man, and the latter asked:

"Did you observe a lady, sir, pass through here?"

"I did."

"Where did she go, please?"

"She entered yonder office."

The detective passed on, and his pursuer settled down to watch yonder office.

Half an hour passed, and the lady did not show up, but at length a boy came from the office, and the man hailed the lad and asked:

"Is there a lady in that office?"

"No, sir."

"There was a lady there?"

"No, sir."

"There was no lady in there?"

"No, sir."

"You are sure?"

"Certainly I am."

"You are employed there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who is in the office?"

"No one; I am alone."

"You are alone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can I look in?"

"Yes, sir."

The lad opened the door. Three offices connected, and the man walked through. There was no one in any of the offices.

"Well," he muttered, "this is strange!"

"There has been no one in here, sir," said the boy.

"Who occupies the offices across the hall?"

"They are vacant."

"Vacant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who has the keys?"

"I have."

"Can you open them?"

"Why should I?"

"See here, my lad, I was to meet a lady here, and she has mysteriously disappeared."

"There has been no lady in this office."

"I will give you a dollar to open the other offices."

The lad produced a key and opened the other offices. They were indeed vacant, the floors were covered with dust; no one had evidently been in them for weeks."

"See here, boy, you are not telling me the truth."

"Why should I lie to you?"

"I do not know why you should lie; but I am sure you are not telling me the truth; and, now listen, tell me where the lady is and I will give you ten dollars."

"I do not know where there is any lady. I have not seen any lady."

The man went out to the hall, and muttered:

"Well, this gets me. I saw her turn into this hall. There is no way out unless she entered one of those offices, and leaped through a window. I saw her turn in here, and the gentleman I met told me she entered yonder office. What can it all mean?"

The man was indeed mystified, and while he stood pondering the same gentleman whom he had first met came into the hall-way.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE man hailed our hero, and said:

"I beg pardon, sir, did I not meet you a few moments ago?"

"I met some gentleman fully three quarters of an hour ago."

"You saw a lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"You said she entered that office?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"The boy denies it."

"Does he?"

"Yes."

"I can not help it if he does."

"No lady came in here!" said the lad.

"Well, I thought she did. I had no interest in the lady. It is possible it was an ocular deception. I did not know the lady."

The man was puzzled. He looked keenly at Manfred, and saw a gentleman who evidently had no motive for deception.

There was a sign on the door of the offices, Edie & Co., and the detective asked of the lad:

"Is Mr. Edie in yet?"

"No, sir."

Manfred turned and walked away, and later on he saw

the man who had been following him leave the building. The detective found a place and worked the second transform; indeed, he wrought a complete change in his appearance, and, returning to the street, the order of things was reversed as our hero became the trailer. He saw his man walk along, and at length enter a drinking-place. Under his disguise the detective followed into the place. The man sat down at a table and called for a ginger-ale. The detective took a seat at an adjoining table and called for a drink. There was a dog in the bar-room, and the animal came and lay at the feet of the man and looked up in his face and commenced to gape like a lazy dog as he was.

There chanced to be no one in the room, save the two customers, as the bar-tender was standing in the door-way. Suddenly there came a voice, saying:

"You're a fool."

The man gave a start and looked around to the table where our hero sat. The latter was gotten up as a workman, a German. The man said:

"Did you speak?"

"Eh?" said Manfred.

"Did you speak?"

"No; I vos not speak."

Again there came a voice, saying:

"You are a fool."

The man glanced around, and the bar-tender, who was a German, sauntered into the room, and our hero addressed him in German. The detective could speak Dutch like a native. The bar-tender and our hero engaged in an animated conversation for a few moments, and the German again walked to the door. All was silent, when there came a female voice, rich and pleasant, saying:

"You are a fool."

The man gave a start, and once again turned and glanced at our hero, who had his mouth filled with rye bread, and was busy munching away like a very hungry man.

"I told you not to follow me!" came the voice, clear and distinct.

The man turned pale, and at the same instant addressing our hero, said:

"Did you speak?'

"Eh? Vot vas der matter mit you all der times? You vas ask me did I speak. No, sir, I vos not speak! Der vas nobody speak, unless it vas der dorg!"

Silence again prevailed for a moment, when for a third time came a voice, saying:

"You promised not to follow me!"

The man leaped from his seat with starting eyes and gazed wildly around, while our hero sat unconcernedly munching his dinner.

The man muttered:

"What does it mean? Am I going mad?"

"You will go mad! I will drive you mad!" came a voice, adding: "I warned you!"

The man trembled, and again appealing to our hero, demanded:

"Did you hear a voice?"

"No; vot vas der matter mit you?"

The man called to the bar-tender; the latter approached, and the customer said:

"Stay here a moment."

"What can I do for you?"

"Listen," said the customer.

Our hero said something to the bar-tender in German, and the bar-tender answered in English:

"Is that so?"

There again came a voice saying in a whisper, right in the man's ear:

"You can not escape me! You have excited my wrath! I will haunt you now!"

Again the man leaped to his feet, and, appealing to the bar-tender, said:

"Did you hear a voice?"

The bar-tender had not heard a voice, and he asked:

"What is the matter with you?"

"Did you hear a voice?"

"No, I did not."

The man was deathly pale, and trembling like a leaf. Again he resumed his seat. The bar-tender walked away, and there followed a moment's quiet, but soon there came a voice, saying:

"Now I know it is not your trunk!"

The voice was quite loud.

Again the man leaped to his feet, and advancing toward our hero, demanded:

"Did you hear it then?"

"Yes, I vos hear somedings."

"What did you hear?"

"Vell, it vos very strange."

"You heard a voice?"

"I vos tought I did hear a voice."

"And what did it say?"

"Someding aboud a trunk."

"This is wonderful!" said the man. "Listen!" and he stood with his eyes fixed on the German, when there came a voice saying, distinctly:

"It is no use, you can not escape me. I will haunt you; yes, I will haunt you."

The German permitted a look of wonder to settle on his face.

"Did you hear it?"

"Ya-a-s," came the response, in a husky voice.

"What did you hear?"

Our hero suddenly permitted his face to relax, and said:

"Oh, dot vas all right."

"What is all right?"

"I vas know your game."

"You know my game?"

"Ya-a-s."

"What is my game?"

"Oh, you vas scare a fellow, but you could not scare me, so I vas not scare."

"You heard the voice?"

"Oh, yes, I vas hear you speak."

"You heard me speak?"

"Yes."

"How do you know I spoke."

"I vas see you speak."

At that moment again there came a voice, saying:

"I will haunt you! I will haunt you!"

The man showed even greater signs of excitement, but our hero only laughed, and calling to the bar-tender, said:

"Come here, Frank, and hear dis man make fun mit his voice."

CHAPTER XXIX.

In sheer bewilderment the man rushed from the place, and our hero followed him after working another disguise.

Meantime, the man who had been haunted by a voice, rushed madly along through the streets, not knowing exactly what to do, and ever and anon he would mutter: "Am I mad? Am I mad?"

The bewildered fellow was rushing thus madly along, when suddenly he was hailed by another gentleman, the latter calling out:

"Hello, Saunders, where now?"

"Is that you, Stevens?"

"It looks like me, does it not?"

"You are just the man I want to see."

"Like the Iron Duke, I am here!"

"Come with me."

The detective was close by and overheard every word.

Saunders caught Stevens by the arm and dragged him away to a crowded restaurant and both seated themselves at a table. The detective was on hand and managed to get a seat near them.

"Do I look sick?" asked Saunders.

"Can't say that you do."

"Do I look like a madman?"

"Can't say that you do."

"I appear all right?"

"Yes, only you show signs of excitement."

"I am excited!"

"What has excited you?"

"I have just passed through a singular adventure."

"Have you found the trunk?"

"I've found the person who holds it.'

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Good, Saunders, I give you credit. I did not think you would succeed so soon."

"I've a strange tale to tell."

"Get on with your story."

"I said I had met the person who has possession of the trunk."

"That is what you said."

"You do not appear anxious to demand who it is."

"Well, who has it?"

"The devil!"

Stevens laughed and said:

"I begin to think you are a little off, and as you claim to be a strong-headed detective I am surprised."

"Possibly you will not believe my strange tale?"

"I do not know why I should not, since I have myself encountered such singular adventures since I've been engaged in this affair."

"This morning I met Miss B——."

"Yes."

"We went to a restaurant together and had a long talk."

"I see."

"Afterward I strolled into the park. I am working a certain clew and have been on a 'lay' in the park for some days past. I seated myself by the lake when a veiled lady came rushing along and fell fainting at my feet."

"Quite an adventure, quite a romance."

"Let me tell you all."

"Yes, proceed."

"I ran to the lady's assistance. I raised her up and bore her to a seat."

Saunders proceeded on, related in detail his strange interview with the disguised detective, and he was finally interrupted by Stevens, who asked:

"Didn't you tumble?"

"To what?"

"A game."

"I did at once."

"Did you see the woman's face?"

"No."

"You should have seen her face. I tell you they are playing a game against us as deep as our own."

"They are; and they have the devil on their side."

"Nonsense, man; you have become bewildered."

"So would you have become bewildered under like circumstances."

"I wish I had met this veiled woman in your stead."

"You may meet her yet before this game is over, but let me tell you what followed."

Saunders related how he had followed the woman and how he had so mysteriously lost sight of her in the large office building.

"Ah, I see."

"See what?"

"She had accomplices in that building. She knew you were following her, and led you there."

"You think so?"

"I do."

"All right; I left the building, went through a transform, and then encountered the strangest incident in the whole affair!"

Saunders proceeded and related his singular adventure in the beer saloon, and, when he had concluded, Stevens said in a suspicious tone:

"This won't do, Saunders."

"What won't do?"

"You can't come that over me."

"I am not seeking to come anything over you."

"Yes; you have a purpose in telling me this cock and bull story!"

"You think so?"

"I do."

"You shall have a chance to meet this veiled lady yourself to-night."

A moment Stevens appeared lost in deep thought, but at length he said:

"Saunders, you are usually a level-headed man."

"I am."

"You have had a great deal of experience?"

"I have."

"You are not easily fooled?"

"I am not."

"And you ought to know me pretty well."

"I do."

"You ought to know I can not be fooled."

"I do know it"

"Then why do you come to me with such a story?"

"I have only related facts."

"Look me straight in the face."

Saunders looked Stevens straight in the face.

"You look all right."

"I am all right."

"You're not drunk?"

"I am not drunk."

"What's your game?"

"I have no game, and I will prove it."

"How?"

"The girl is to meet me to-night."

"Yes."

"She is to show me the trunk."

"Yes."

"You shall go with me; you shall meet this strange woman, and you will learn that I have told you the truth."

"Of course you are aware that yours is a remarkable tale?"

"I am aware of it."

"If what you tell me is true, you are the victim of some trick."

"I see; yes, I have thought of that, but it is a trick so well played I can not fathom it."

"We must fathom it to-night."

"We will try."

"This is a game for a million."

"I know it."

"We must stop at nothing."

"We will not; but the other side are playing in the dark."

"Yes, and this game has commenced lately. We had it all our own way before."

"We did."

"We must have it so again."

CHAPTER XXX.

"THAT is what they are trying for, Stevens!" said Saunders.

"And we will do it; desperate cases require desperate remedies."

"Always."

"As I said, it is a play for a million."

"Yes."

"The trouble has all come since this fellow O'Grady, as he calls himself, has come into the case."

"I see."

"We can work a sure game."

"Name it."

"We must get possession of these people, one after another."

"That is our only plan."

"O'Grady must be gotten out of the way."

"I see."

"Do you take it all in?"

"I think I do."

"That man must go under."

"I see."

"We must down him."

"Yes."

"Or some other accident must happen to him."

"Yes; I see."

"You must meet him."

"I've been trying to meet him."

"When you do you must settle his case."

A fierce look came over Saunders's face as he muttered:

"Leave that to me!"

"I must leave it to you."

"And how about to-night?"

"I will meet the woman and you must be on hand."

"Do you think the woman will meet you?"

"I can not tell."

"If it is a game she has probably played it out so far."

"She may meet me."

"And now how about that mysterious voice?"

"That is a part of the game I can not explain."

"You are to meet the woman at eleven o'clock?"

"Yes."

"She is to take you to some place?"

"Yes."

"I will be on hand."

"You must have two or three trusty men with you."

"Never fear."

"And whatever the game is we must beat it."

"At all hazards."

The two men held a long consultation in a low tone, but our hero managed to catch on to all their arrangements, and a smile played over his face at the idea of the fun he anticipated when the game really opened.

The men Stevens and Saunders finally separated, and our hero let them go their several ways.

Manfred was well satisfied that he had the game all in his own hands; he was also satisfied that the lady under his protection was the real Mrs. Silver, and that the girl whom he had met on the train was the rightful owner of the trunk; but the point in hand was the finding of the girl who had so very mysteriously disappeared.

Our hero determined to go through the little game he had arranged, and on the following day he was resolved to set on foot the most energetic measures for finding the missing girl.

Manfred spent the balance of the day arranging his plans for the night. He intended to have heaps of fun, as he expressed it, and at the same time he determined to give the conspirators a terrible set back; indeed, he calculated he might burst their game altogether and drive them from the field.

At eleven o'clock our hero, again disguised as the female, appeared at the place where he had agreed to meet the man Saunders; the latter was on hand. He had been pacing to and fro for some time; indeed, he had no idea the veiled lady would appear, and despite his bewilderment of the morning he was delighted when he saw her.

"You are here?" he said.

"Yes; but I was half determined not to come."

"Why?"

"You did not keep your word."

"I did not keep my word?"

"No."

"How did I break it?"

"You followed me."

"I did not."

"You deny following me?"

"I do."

"Certainly you are a barefaced man to deny it."

"I do deny it."

"I can prove you followed me."

"I wish you would."

"You desire the proofs?"

"Yes."

The woman laughed under her veil, and said:

"I warned you."

"And I heeded your warning."

"I told you I was no ordinary person."

"I do not think you are."

"I gave you the slip, however."

The man gazed aghast.

"You thought I went into that office."

The man stood speechless.

"The boy told you the truth. I did not go into the office. He did not see me."

"Did the gentleman?"

Again the woman laughed, and said:

"Ah, you own up?"

"Yes, I own up."

"You admit you followed me?"

"I do."

"Why did you not heed my warning?"

"I desired to find out who you were."

"The gentleman didn't see me. He told you the truth."

"And where did you go?"

"I vanished into the air."

"You played a nice trick."

"You don't believe I vanished into the air?"

"No."

"You ought to believe it."

"Why?"

"I scared you well enough."

"You scared me?"

"Yes. I saw you all the time, but you did not see me.

I tell you now I am a strange being. I know more than you dream, but I am going to show you the trunk, all the same; that is, if you have the courage to go and see it."

"I have the courage, but you said you saw me all the time."

"I did. I can tell you just where you went, and just whom you saw, and all you said."

"You can?"

"I can."

"I wish you would."

"No, it would not do."

"Why not?"

"You will become scared and will not go with me."

"I will go with you to see the trunk, even though you may prove you are the devil's wife!"

"If I thought you would not be scared, I would surprise you."

"I do not scare."

"I know all about you."

"You know all about me?"

"Yes."

"What do you know?"

"All about you."

"What do you know?" repeated Saunders.

"You are employed to aid in a conspiracy."

Saunders gave a start.

"I see; you are engaged in a conspiracy yourself."

The woman laughed under her veil, and Saunders resolved that when a good opportunity offered he would rend that veil aside and behold the face it concealed.

The game went on.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE two who had so strangely met, were beginning to understand each other, and although the woman still kept her veil drawn down, each was throwing aside the mask.

"You say you know me?"

"Yes."

"Who am I?"

"You are a detective, and your name is Saunders."

The man let fall a muttered oath.

"You are employed by a man named Stevens; you had a long talk with him to-day after I scared you out of the beer saloon, where you acted in such a manner as to make the bar-tender think you were crazy."

The two at the moment were standing under a gas-light, and Saunders said in an agitated tone:

"Will you remove your veil?"

"Why should I?"

"Because after all you have said I desire to see your face."

"You will not recognize me."

"I must see your face."

"You can not see my face until you see the trunk."

"Then you will show your face?"

"Yes."

"Why not now?"

"It will scare you."

"I am not easily scared. I insist upon seeing your face now."

"You can not."

"I will!"

"Be careful!"

"I will see your face!"

"You insist?"

"I do."

"Then I shall leave you."

Saunders suddenly reached forward, seized the veil and tore it aside. The face was revealed; the disguised detective had gotten himself up well. He was to all appearances a lady, pretty and saucy. The man Saunders glared.

"Well, you have seen my face."

"I see your face."

"Do you know me?"

"No."

"Then I can lower my veil?"

"Yes."

"I am not bound now to show you the trunk."

"You can do as you please."

"I please."

"Now, what is your pleasure?"

"I will show the trunk unless you are afraid of a woman, and dare not go and see it."

"Where is the trunk?"

"Not far from here."

"You are up to some game."

"So are you."

"You admit you are up to a game?"

"Yes."

"What is your game?"

"I am seeking the real owner of the trunk."

"You do not believe I am the real owner of the trunk?"

"No, I do not."

"Why do you show it to me?"

"I have a reason."

"What is your reason?"

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes."

"I wish to solve a mystery."

"What mystery?"

"The mystery of the lady who was with you this morning."

"What mystery is there about the lady?"

"She may be the owner of the trunk."

"She may be?"

"Yes."

"Why do you say so?"

"She resembles the man who owned the treasure sufficiently to be his daughter."

Saunders uttered an exclamation of amazement; the latter declaration of the mysterious woman was the most remarkable one she had let fall.

"One word," he asked. "Are you really anxious to find the owner of the trunk?"

"I am."

"Do you know anything of the party to whom the trunk originally belonged?"

"I have already betrayed such knowledge."

"Will you tell me who you are?"

"No, not now."

"When?"

"After you have seen the trunk."

At that moment there came a signal call. Saunders recognized it, and knew that his confederates were on hand. The man was bewildered and mystified, and yet he was satisfied that he was talking to the party who really held the mysterious trunk; and what is more he felt also a suspicion creeping through his mind that the woman might be honest and really in search of the owner of the trunk.

"There is something very remarkable about you," he said.

"I told you there was."

"Have you any personal interest in the trunk or its contents?"

"I have not."

"You are honestly seeking the proper owner?"

"I am."

"And you will show it to me?"

"I've said I would."

"And you also say you do not believe I am the owner?"

"You do not claim to be the owner."

"But I claim to represent the true owner."

"That is the mystery I wish to solve."

"I have one more word to say: this morning you warned me."

"Yes."

"Now I shall warn you."

"Good."

"If you attempt any treachery, it will be bad for you."

The disguised detective laughed and said:

"I do not fear, it is you who must look out. I think you intend treachery, but it will be at your peril."

"Why should I attempt treachery?"

"You know best yourself."

"And you still propose to show me the trunk?"

"Yes."

"I am ready to see it."

"Come."

The woman started away, and the man Saunders followed.

Singularly enough, our hero led the man to his own house, and as our narrative progresses, our readers will learn why Manfred did so.

As the two walked along Saunders said:

"I wish I knew just who you are."

"You shall know."

"When?"

"To-night."

"I wish I knew now."

"Why?"

"It might change my plans."

"Change your plans?"

"Yes."

"What are your plans?"

"I can not tell you, but I will if you reveal your real identity."

"I can not do it now."

"There is something remarkable about you."

"So I told you."

"You played a wonderful trick on me to-day."

"Yes, I did."

The detective laughed.

"Will you explain to me how you did it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I can not explain."

"And you will not tell me who you are?"

"No, not now."

"Listen, if you will reveal to me who you are, I may aid you."

"Aid me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"To find the real owner of the trunk."

"Aha! you are making a strange admission.

"Yes," said Saunders, "and I am prepared to make even stranger admissions."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE detective inwardly smiled. He was no gudgeon, and did not propose to nibble at false bait. He saw that the man Saunders was leading for an exchange of confidence, or rather a pretended exchange.

"I can not tell you who I am, under any circumstances."

"The time may come when you will be sorry you did not."

"When that time arrives I will have to stand my regrets, that's all; at present I am saying nothing about myself."

The parties reached our hero's home, and when Saunders recognized what a handsome house it was he recoiled and exclaimed:

"Do you live here?"

"Temporarily."

"This is not your home?"

"It is the home of a friend."

We will here state that Manfred's neighbors knew nothing about him positively; all that they knew was that a mysterious sort of person lived in the house. Once one of the neighbors had spoken to the police and all the information he got was:

"It's all right; we know all about the party living there."

"Who is he? and what is he?" demanded the inquirer.

"He is all right."

"But who is he?"

"It is not fair to tell one neighbor the affairs of the other. We tell you it is all right. We know what we are talking about."

The detective's home occupied part of a square and was surrounded by a garden filled with a dense growth of trees and shrubbery. The house was not visible from the street.

Manfred led the way to the grand entrance to his house and rang the bell; a moment passed, when the door was opened by a servant dressed in the most fantastic manner; indeed he was a huge black man, dressed in pure white, after the manner of the ancient Romans. Saunders recoiled in amazement.

"What is the matter?"

"I do not understand."

"Understand what?"

"Well, this is all so unconventional in the nineteenth century, and in a house in New York."

"You have not entered the house yet; you are to encounter greater mysteries."

"Will you excuse me a moment, miss?"

The man stepped down the stoop.

"Do you intend to go away?"

"No."

Saunders stepped to the gate and a man stole up to him. It was Stevens.

"I don't know what to make of it," said Saunders.

"What is the matter?"

"Here is an elegant house right at hand."

"Well?"

"The woman intends for me to enter."

"All right, do so, and you never fear that I will get in and stand ready to answer any signal."

"But how will you get in?"

"Never mind, leave that to me."

Saunders returned to the stoop where Manfred awaited him.

"Ah, you have returned?"

"Certainly."

"I did not expect you to come back."

"Why not?"

"Well, it struck me you were terrorized."

"I am never terrorized."

"So much the better."

The detective led the way into the house, and ushered

his companion into an elegantly furnished parlor. The chandeliers shed a blaze of light on furniture of the most rich and massive make, and *bric-à-brac* of every description was scattered on every hand.

Saunders looked around in amazement, and at length muttered:

"This is wonderful."

"Yes."

"Your friend is rich?"

"Yes."

"Does your friend know about the trunk?"

"Yes."

"He has no inducement to retain what does not belong to him?"

"No; and now listen to me; I propose first to take you into my wonder-room and show you some strange sights."

"I came here to see the trunk."

"You shall see the trunk."

"I do not desire to see anything else."

"Very well, we will not go to the wonder-room yet."

The detective led Saunders up a grand staircase to a room on the second floor and ushered him in.

"Take a seat, sir," said our hero.

The room was but dimly lighted. Saunders was becoming quite nervous and uneasy. There was a weirdness in his surroundings which played sad havoc with his nervous system.

He took a seat, and the veiled woman said:

"Wait!" and disappeared.

She left the room and the door closed behind her.

Saunders sat some moments, and then rose from his seat and wandered around the room, pacing to and fro, lost in deep thought.

"Where will this all end" he said; "it is the most remarkable adventure of my life."

Meantime, Manfred descended the stairs. He had changed his disguise, and passed out to the garden surrounding the house, and a moment later he espied two dark figures lurking in the shadow of the trees.

He advanced, and demanded:

"Who is there?"

A man stepped out.

"Who are you?" demanded Manfred.

"Do you live in this house?"

"Yes, I do."

"Are you the proprietor?"

"No."

"A guest?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Sure, I'm a servant?"

"You are a servant?"

"I am."

"Who is the owner of that house?"

"Shall I take you in and introduce you to my mistress?"

"The owner is a lady?"

"Yes."

"Who lives with her?"

"And who are you, a robber?"

"No; I am a gentleman."

"You are a gentleman?"

"Yes."

"Gentlemen do not go prowling around the gardens of other people after midnight asking questions."

"I can explain why I am here."

"Can you?"

"I can."

"Well, please do so."

"I am looking for a missing person; and now see here, I will give you fifty dollars to answer a few questions."

"You will give me fifty dollars?"

"Yes."

"You can have no good purpose when you offer me fifty dollars."

"I am a police officer."

"Oh, you are?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I have reason to believe that the party I seek is in that house."

"There is no one there that you seek."

"I have reason to believe she is there."

"You seek a lady?"

"Yes."

"It may be my mistress?"

"It may be."

"Come, and I will take you right into the house and present you. I know my mistress has not yet retired."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

STEVENS approached the pretended servant, and said:

"See here, my man, I am a detective officer."

"Well?"

"I am on secret duty."

"Indeed."

"I can arerest you."

"You can arrest me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"Well, on the charge of extraordinary emergency."

"I never heard of that charge."

"No; but it is a privilege detectives have; but I do not desire to arrest you, unless I am compelled to do so."

"You can arrest me if you choose."

"No; but you must answer me a few questions."

"I am willing to answer your questions."

"I want to know something about your mistress."

"It's little I can tell you."

"Why?"

"I've only been in her service a week."

"Only a week?"

"Yes; and I do not intend to remain."

"You do not intend to remain?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I don't like the service."

"Why do you not like the service?"

"It's a queer sort of a house."

"You're right, it's a queer house, and I do not blame you for wishing to leave it; are you looking for another place?"

"I may be, sir."

"I can get a place for you."

"Well, you are very kind."

"And now listen; I wish to enter that house secretly."

"Secretly?"

"Yes."

"Then it's a thief you are?"

"No; I am a detective."

"And you want to enter the house secretly?"

"Yes; we detectives sometimes have to work in the dark."

"It's dark enough for you to-night."

"I am speaking metaphorically."

"Ah!"

"You can take me into that house?"

"Easy enough."

"If you will I will pay you fifty dollars, and you can come to me and I will get you another place."

"I'm no fool, Mister Detective."

"Of course you're not a fool!"

"It's bribing me you are."

"Well, yes."

"And you will give me fifty dollars?"

"I will."

"Do you mind one thing. I'll watch you; if I take you into the house and if you are thieves, I will give the alarm!"

"We are not thieves."

"All right, I will take you into the house, come along."

Stevens, followed by the man who was with him, was led into the house; the pretended servant led him up to a room on the second floor and said:

"Here you are!"

"Now you go away," said Stevens.

"I will watch you."

"Hold on," said Stevens; "there is another man in the house."

"There is; he came in with my mistress."

"Do you know what room they are in?"

"I do not."

"Can you find out?"

"I can."

"Do so, and come back here and let me know, and I will pay you one hundred dollars instead of fifty!"

"Well, sit down there, and I will go and see if I can find out where my mistress and the other man are at this moment."

The two men took seats, and turning to his companion, Stevens said in a low tone:

"This is an odd adventure."

"It is."

"We must look out."

"You're right."

"An idea has entered my head."

"Ah, what is it?"

"We got into this house too easy altogether."

"You think it is a game?"

"I do."

"I have thought so all along; that servant was acting under instructions."

"I suspected it myself, still I was willing to be led into the house."

"We may have got in easier than we can get out."

"What makes you think so?"

"There is a nice game going on."

As the man spoke he attempted to rise from his seat, but uttered a suppressed cry of alarm and surprise.

"What is the matter?" inquired Stevens.

"Come here!"

Stevens attempted to rise, but he too uttered an exclamation of surprise and alarm.

"What is the matter?" queried his companion.

"The devil!" ejaculated Stevens.

"What is the matter?"

"Come here!"

"I can't!"

"You can't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'm fast."

"Fast!" ejaculated Stevens.

"Yes."

"How fast?"

"I'm glued to my seat. I'm paralyzed."

"So am I," came the response.

"We're caught in a trap!" said the man.

Both men were cool despite their dilemma and their surprise.

Both men were indeed paralyzed, and at that moment there came a mysterious voice, saying:

"Is that you, Stevens?"

The man uttered an ejaculation of surprise but did not answer.

Again the voice called:

"Are you there, Stevens?"

"Who speaks?"

"Saunders."

"I do not recognize your voice."

"Do you recognize it now?"

"Yes."

"And you are there?"

"Yes."

"What are you doing?"

"Waiting."

"For what?"

"To find out where you are."

"Come to me."

"Where are you?"

"Here."

"Where?"

"You will have to be guided by my voice. I do not know where I am."

"I am in the same box."

"Follow my voice."

"I can't; you come to me."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I've been trapped. I can not move."

"You can not move?"

"No."

"I am in the same box."

"You are in the same box?"

"Yes."

"Are you alone?"

"No."

"Who is with you?"

"Baily."

"Let him come."

"He is fast; he can't move."

"We've been nicely fooled."

"I should say so."

"What are we to do?"

"What are your orders?"

"To wait."

"Those are mine also, and that is all we can do at present."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"WHERE will this end?" demanded Stevens.

There came no answer, and he called out again:

"Saunders!"

There came no answer. A third time he called:

"Saunders!"

Still there came no answer, but another voice called:

"Does any one speak?"

"Yes."

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I want some one to come here."

"Wait."

"Who are you?"

"Wait."

"Is your name Wait?"

"At present, yes."

The lights in the room went out, and Stevens, addressing his companion, said:

"This is a go."

"I should say so."

"We're in for it."

"I should say so."

"We've been nicely played."

"I should say so."

Both men were cool; they were greatly mystified, but fully aware that they had been caught in their own trap, and they had evidently made up their minds to make the best of the situation. Suddenly there shone a bright light on one side of the room, and at the same instant a figure began to assume form and shape in the light, and in a few seconds the figure of a female was fully revealed.

Stevens uttered a cry of amazement and even of terror.

There came a voice speaking as though it were the figure; it was a female voice, and the words were:

"At last!"

Stevens sat still and motionless, even speechless.

"At last! at last!" repeated the voice.

There followed a moment's silence; streams of perspiration poured down the ghastly face of Stevens.

"At last, Henry Stevens, we are face to face. I have come—I have come to see you die, wretch! I have come to see you die!"

Stevens uttered a groan, but his companion cheered him up with the remark:

"Take it easy, old man; it's a good story; let's see it out."

The figure disappeared, and in its place came the figure of a man; the latter figure was a horrible apparition; it was the form evidently of a temporarily reanimated corpse.

Stevens uttered a groan, and even his companion remained silent.

"At last! at last!" spoke the corpse.

There followed an instant's silence, when the voice resumed:

"At last! at last we are face to face, and I have come see you die!"

"Hold on!" cried Stevens. "Stop this farce! I give up the game!"

The voice came from the figure:

"Ah, you recognize me?"

"Bah! I see through the game. Give it up, whoever is working it, and come here and we will talk matters over."

There came a laugh.

"You give up the game?"

"Yes."

"What will you give up?"

"Everything."

"What have you to give up?"

There came no answer, and the voice said:

"You shall see the trunk."

The figure disappeared, and there came the picture of a trunk.

"See it opened!" said the voice.

The trunk appeared to open, and money and jewels and bonds were revealed. Stevens uttered a cry of astonishment.

"Do you see it all?"

"Yes."

"And do you want the trunk?"

"No."

"You give up the game?"

"Yes."

There came a laugh, and a voice saying:

"You're too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"You have gone too far."

"I'm beat."

"You acknowledge you're beat?"

"Yes."

"Why, man, you are doomed to die!"

"I've had enough of this show."

"And you are ready to die?"

"Yes."

"Possibly you think it all a joke?"

"No; I understand the whole business."

"And you give up the scheme?"

"Yes."

"Are you ready to confess?"

"Yes."

"All."

"Yes, all."

"Ready to admit you were engaged in a scheme?"

"Yes."

"You will admit that Mr. Silver had a wife?"

"Yes."

"And a daughter?"

"Yes."

"And that Mrs. Brownell is not his heir?"

"Ah, there you are off, Mr. O'Grady!" said Stevens. "You have played a nice game, but you have not as many facts as I reckoned you had."

"So you think it is Mr. O'Grady talking to you?"

"I know it is."

"Well?"

"You have not all the facts, but come stop this show business; let on the light; come in here and talk like a man face to face, and what you don't know I'll tell you!"

"You will?"

"I will."

"You are not up to another game?"

"I am not."

"Do you want Saunders in the room?"

"Just as you please."

"And you will confess all?"

"All."

The figures all disappeared; lights shone in the room; Stevens and his friend were released, and Manfred, accompanied by two other men, entered the room. Our hero was gotten up as O'Grady.

"Well, Mr. Stevens, we meet again."

"Yes, and I am glad to meet you."

"You are willing to make good your word?"

"I am. I never liked the game anyhow, and I would never have gone into it if I had known all the facts."

"That is straight talk."

"I mean to give you straight talk; Mrs. Silver is in this home."

"How do you know?"

"Your magic lantern business did not deceive me, but it opened my eyes to the fact."

"To what fact?"

"That Mrs. Silver had found powerful friends."

"Did you ever know Mrs. Silver?"

"I never knew her by sight until a week ago."

"When and where did you see her for the first time?"

"At C——."

"And you became the persecutor of a helpless woman?"

"I tell you I have explanations to make."

"Make them."

"I will make them to the proper party."

"Who is the proper party?"

"Mrs. Silver."

CHAPTER XXXV.

Our hero was thoughtful a moment. He had played his game too well to be beaten at the last moment by a pretended surrender.

"You will explain all?"

"Yes."

"Do so now."

"I have said Mrs. Silver was in this house."

"Well?"

"I am sure she is."

"Well?"

"I will make my explanations to her."

"Why to her?"

"I have my reasons."

"You must make them to me."

"I will not."

"Very well; then you will not make them at all."

"I am willing to hold my peace. I am not demanding to make any explanations; you are demanding that I shall. It does not matter to me whether I make any or not."

We will recall to our readers the incident where Manfred fooled a lawyer and obtained obtained possession of his office; and our readers will also remember that our hero overheard certain strange revelations. At the time he did not understand their full purport; indeed, a suspicion had passed through his mind that his presence was suspected, and that what he overheard was really intended for his hearing; but later another little incident had presented the possibility that he had overheard real facts, that the conversation to which we allude was genuine.

"You utterly refuse to make any explanations to me?"

"I do."

"You demand to make your explanations to Mrs. Silver?"

"Yes, if I make any at all."

"There is no explanation that you will make to me?"

"None."

"Yes, listen: one night Mrs. Silver was on the train coming from C——; you were on the same train; you were following her."

Stevens's eyes opened, while the detective continued:

"That night Mrs. Silver met a friend on the train; that friend was compelled to defend her life because you made an attack upon her."

"I admit all except that I made an attack upon her; the attack was made upon me."

"By whom?"

"The friend."

"Did you not rush upon Mrs. Silver and remove her veil?"

"I did, but all I desired was to see her face."

"That's not a satisfactory explanation."

"I will explain more fully to Mrs. Silver."

"No; that will not do."

"Why not?"

"You may have found that you are in a desperate strait; you may still have a scheme."

"Ah, I see you fear to let me appear in the presence of Mrs. Silver."

"Yes."

"You need not fear."

"It is easy to say so."

"I will explain thus far: at the time I really believed Mrs. Silver to be a fraud; but I intended her no bodily harm."

"I have heard conversations between you and Saunders."

"You have?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"In those talks strange intimations were thrown out."

"I see what you mean, and I will explain that. After I became satisfied that Mrs. Silver was the widow of my former client, I felt compelled to pretend to continue in a certain scheme, when I had determined on an entirely different line of action."

The man's statements agreed with other facts in our hero's possession.

"You did not intend, then, to murder me?"

"No."

"But do you remember suggesting such a thing?"

"I do."

"You made strong efforts to secure a certain trunk?"

"I did."

"What was your purpose?"

"I will explain to Mrs. Silver."

Our hero was satisfied that, whatever Mr. Stevens's original plans were, he had changed them, and he said:

"You shall see Mrs. Silver and make your explanations. Follow me."

Our hero led Mr. Stevens from the room, and a moment later ushered him into another apartment, with the remark:

"Wait here a moment."

Manfred went away, but returned in a few moments accompanied by a lady dressed in street costume and heavily veiled.

"Mr. Stevens, permit me to introduce to you Mrs. Silver."

"I must see the lady's face."

The veil was removed, and the face of the real Mrs. Silver was revealed.

A moment Stevens sat silent and gazed, but after a moment he said:

"It gives me great pleasure, madame, to meet you."

"I will be frank, sir."

"Please do."

"I do not place confidence in your declaration, and I shall have little confidence in anything you shall tell me, unless from the start I am convinced of your frankness and absolute determination to tell the truth."

"I have no other purpose."

"Very well, I am prepared to listen to your statements."

"Madame, you have heard of James Elverton."

"I have heard the name mentioned."

"By whom?"

"My husband."

"You know then that he was your husband's friend and counsel?"

"I believe he was my husband's legal adviser."

"He was, and had charge of your husband's legal affairs. I was a clerk with Mr. Elverton. I was with him many years, and while there learned many facts concerning Mr. Silver. I was also well acquainted with the fact that Mrs. Brownell was your husband's cousin and friend."

"They were cousins; yes."

"The friendship you question?"

Mrs. Silver remained silent.

"Very well, I will proceed. The family went to Europe. I had never heard of you; years passed and one day a lady appeared in my office. She removed her veil, and I was struck by a wonderful resemblance to Mr. Silver, a gentleman whom I had often seen; this lady told me that she was the daughter of Mr. Silver, and her wonderful personal resemblance bore out her claim."

"I have heard of this lady," said Mrs. Silver.

"Yes, madame, and Mr. O'Grady has seen her and can readily bear out my statement as to the remarkable resemblance."

The detective nodded his head, and asked:

"Can you explain that resemblance?"

"I can."

"Will you?"

"Later on; but I wish to explain how I came to appear to play the part of a villain."

"You admit you appeared to play the part of a villain?"

"I do, but I can clear myself, as I have some further remarkable revelations to make."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

RESUMING after a moment, Stevens said:

"This lady presented herself as the daughter of Mr. Silver, and she told me a remarkable story. She said her father had married her mother and had deserted her, and that he had disappeared. She said further that she had not seen him for many years, but had within a short time learned that he was alive. She had sought out Mr. Elverton, and had learned that he was dead; and she further said that there was a woman claiming to be her father's wife; that the woman had been in an asylum, but had escaped; that the woman was really crazy, but was being used by others so that through her they could obtain possession of the fortune her father was known to possess. Now listen," continued the lawyer, "I am familiar with Mr. Silver's handwriting, and she presented letters written in his hand confirming the fact of his marriage, the fact of his having a daughter, and also the fact of his wife's death."

"My husband testified to my death?" exclaimed Mrs. Silver.

"Yes."

"The letters were forgeries."

"No, madame, they were not forgeries."

"They must have been, for I am not dead."

"Ah, I see it all now. Your husband had been made to believe that you were dead, and, as I remember the letters now, I can see they were on information and belief. Your enemies must have made him believe that you were dead, and they succeeded in making me believe that the lady who claimed to be Mr. Silver's daughter really was so, and she was, as I supposed, and had good reason to suppose, really seeking a lost father."

"At the time did you know where Mr. Silver resided?"

"I did not."

"It was proved that a gentleman frequently visited him?"

"Yes, it was Mr. Elverton, but the latter is dead."

"How long has he been dead?"

"Less than a year."

"Proceed."

"The young lady who claimed to Miss Silver furnished other proofs of the most convincing character, and withal, please remember, she bears a most striking and wonderful resemblance to Mr. Silver."

"Who can she be?"

"I have an idea; indeed, I think I know; but let me proceed. I only discovered Mr. Silver's residence after his death.

"You were the lawyer who appeared at the inquest?"

"I am."

"It was you who testified that there was a will?"

"Yes."

"Did you know there was a will?"

"I remembered that Mr. Silver had once made a will which had been drawn by Mr. Elverton; and I supposed, as a matter of course, there must be a will."

"Who could have murdered my husband?"

"Murdered your husband, madame?"

"Yes."

"Do you think your husband was murdered?"

"I do."

"No, no; it was a case of suicide, and it will be so proved when—"

The lawyer stopped.

"When, sir?" queried Mrs. Silver.

"When we find the mysterious owner of the trunk."

"Whom do you believe the owner of the trunk to be?"

"Mr. Silver's daughter, or his murderers, if indeed you are right, and he really was murdered; but I do not believe in the murder theory; but let me proceed. I had seen a portrait of yourself, and I had heard stories concerning you which led me to believe that you were a bad woman, and when I learned of the trunk, I suspected you were the owner of it, and I also suspected that you wrongfully had in your possession what did not belong to you. I met you at C—— and started to follow you, and you know how I followed you on board of the train, and how you eluded me. I have not seen you since until now."

"How is it you have suddenly become convinced that I am Mrs. Silver?"

"I will tell you. It was after the death of Mr. Silver that I began to doubt the genuineness of the claim of the lady who had presented herself as Mr. Silver's daughter, but I was not fully convinced of her dishonesty until Mr. O'Grady caught her in a wide discrepancy as to facts concerning the trunk. When I taxed her and finally compelled her to confess the truth, she confessed that she was not Mr. Silver's daughter, but at least his nearest relative, and the true heiress of his wealth, I determined to investigate the truth, and to the best of my ability establish it, and up to a certain time I believed it was diamond cut diamond, a double scheme to get possession of the furtune; there was one mystery I could not solve."

"What mystery was that?"

"I could not locate and identify the party who shipped the mysterious trunk."

"Do you know now?"

"I suspect."

"What do you suspect?"

"I suspect that the lady who shipped the trunk is Mr. Silver's daughter and yours."

"Do you suspect what has become of her?"

"I do not."

"Do you know of any reason why she should remain in hiding?"

"I do."

"What do you suspect?"

"I suspect she is aware of the schemes of the man Saunders."

"And who is Saunders?"

"The man who will marry the claimant in case she establishes her right to the fortune and secures it."

"And he is the schemer?"

"He is the schemer."

"And you have schemed with him?" suggested Manfred.

"I have done so, yes; and having engaged with him or rather been engaged by him, I resolved to go through until the truth was established."

"Will you tell me who the lady is who claims to be Mr. Silver's daughter?"

"She is Mrs. Brownell's granddaughter, and, being a blood connection of Mr. Silver, although the relationship is lateral and far removed, the resemblance is accounted for; it is one of those events or incidents in family history which sometimes occur."

"Is Mrs. Brownell really dead?"

"Yes."

"What members of her family are living?"

"Only this granddaughter."

"All her own children are dead?"

"Yes; the two daughters died before the mother; consumption was in the family."

"And the girl's father is dead?"

"Yes; he died when this girl was an infant, and she was reared and educated by her grandmother, and thereby obtained all the proofs that were at first submitted to me when I was engaged to undertake the case for her.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Mr. Stevens had certainly related a strange tale; his explanations were remarkable; and, what is more, our hero believed that the man's story was true.

As our readers will remember, the man Stevens owned a sinister-looking face. Manfred believed the man to be a villain, a fellow who would enter into any bad scheme where there was profit; but the man was shrewd enough to discover that it was a losing game he was playing, and circumstances permitted him to make the seemingly satisfactory explanation of his connection with the affair. Indeed, he was permitted to make explanations which allowed it to seem as though he were an honest man. Our hero took no stock in his honesty, but he knew he was a beaten man, a man who fully knew he could not win, and was ready to give his fellow companions away to save himself. Indeed, Manfred believed that the man knew from the start it was a game, but concluded to pretend to accept his plausible explanation; and, after some further talk, our hero said:

"I wish to bring Saunders into the room."

"Yes, go."

"And you are prepared to let him know that you are convinced that this lady is really the widow of Mr. Silver?"

"I am."

When a bad man goes to pieces, he goes bad, and oft becomes as zealous on one side as he had formerly been on another.

Saunders was called into the room, and the detective said:

"Mr. Saunders, we have just learned from Mr. Stevens that he has been laboring under a misapprehension, and I have thought that probably it might be so in your case also."

Saunders looked glum and savage, and said:

"Oh, I see it all; it's a nice game."

"What is the game?"

"That this man has been playing into your hands all along."

"You think so?"

"I know it."

"Very well, sir, you are at liberty to depart; but I have a word to drop in your ear; when Mr. Stevens gives up the game, it is of no use for you to seek to continue it."

"I have been engaged in no scheme; I am after the right, and I shall have the right before I get through."

Mr. Saunders was escorted from the room, and later on left the house, and still later Mr. Stevens also took his departure, and Mrs. Silver and the detective were left alone.

Our hero had had witnesses to all that had passed, and as he also had the fortune in his possession, he did not fear what might come afterward.

"Well, madame," he said, "I have played a winning game."

"Sir, you are a wonderful man."

"I shall not think so until I have solved the mystery of the owner of the trunk."

"That mystery is solved."

"I think her identity is established, but that is not all we have to do."

"What more must we do?"

"Find the owner of the trunk."

"Oh, sir, I know you will find her."

"I hope I shall."

On the day following the incidents we have narrated, our hero was on the street. He was proceeding along under a proper disguise when he met Saunders. The latter did not recognize the detective, and was walking along at a rapid gait like a man who had business on hand.

"I reckon I'll just follow that fellow and learn what he's up to," said the detective, and he fell to the man's trail.

The man went to Central Park and proceeded direct to the spot where our hero had first met him and had come the little strange lady game on him. The man proceeded to the very seat where he had been seated upon the occasion when, as stated, our hero appeared before him; but this time he did not have the seat to himself. A lady occupied it—a veiled lady—and she was evidently waiting for him.

The detective secured a listening spot and waited.

"You got my message?" was the salutation Saunders received.

"I did."

"When?"

"About an hour ago."

"Not until an hour ago?"

"No."

"I have been waiting here five hours."

"You have been waiting here five hours?"

"Yes."

"How is that?"

"I sent the message nearly six hours ago."

"I came as soon as I received it, and now tell me, what have you learned?"

"I am on the girl's track, I think."

"You are on her track?"

"I think I am."

"Good; if we can find her we are all right, yet it is the girl who walks here in the park."

"No."

"It is not she?"

"No."

"You are sure?"

"I am."

"Have you tried her?"

"Tried her, yes; and I am fully convinced she is not the girl we are after."

"Who is the girl you are after?"

"I will tell you. To-day I got into a car and a veiled lady entered—you know we are looking for a veiled lady."

"Yes."

"Well, I've been sounding every veiled lady I've met lately, and when I saw this lady get into the car this morning I said to myself, here's another. Well, I watched her closely, and when she got off the car I followed. I had become greatly encouraged meantime, because I discovered that the veiled girl was nervous and acted like one who feared being observed."

"If you have found her at last, Madge, you have done a great thing."

"I told you I should find her, and I have."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, I am sure."

Saunders became greatly excited and said:

"Do you know Stevens has turned against us?"

"He has, eh?"

"Yes."

"I expected he would."

"But we can beat them yet, if we can obtain possession of the owner of that trunk."

"We will get possession of her."

Saunders's face was pale as he said:

"It is not possible."

"I tell you I have found her."

"If you have found her we are all right."

"I have found her, I say."

"Have you spoken to her?"

"I have."

"And has she admitted her identity?"

The woman laughed and said:

"She does not think she has, but she has all the same."

"How?"

"Well, you must let me tell my story."

"Proceed."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BEGINNING her narrative, the woman said:

"The moment I saw her leave the car I made up my mind that I was on a good trail, and I followed her until an opportunity offered to speak to her, when I demanded, abruptly:

"'Madame, have you lost anything?' The woman uttered a cry, and turning, gazed at me from under her veil, while trembling like an aspen-leaf. I repeated my question, and she demanded:

"'Why do you ask?'

"'I thought you looked like a lady whom I saw at C——,' I said. Well, then I knew I had her. She almost screamed outright, and moved away without making any reply."

"And did you follow her?" asked Saunders.

"Did I follow her? Well, I should say I did!" answered the woman.

"And you trailed her?"

"I did."

"Did she know you were following her?"

"She did not."

"This is wonderful news, Madge."

"I tell you I have found the owner of the trunk."

"And where does she live?"

"I will lead you there; but now the question arises, what shall we do?"

A moment Saunders was lost in thought, but at length said:

"Madge, I have been thinking."

"You are a good thinker, as a rule."

"If this girl is removed, Lucy Brownell becomes heiress at law."

"How about the widow?"

"She only inherits a part of the estate, and if she has personal property in her possession can be called to an accounting."

A moment the woman was silent; at length she said:

"I think I see your game."

"What is my game?"

"Well, the girl must be removed."

"That is the game."

"How shall we remove her?"

"That is for you to decide."

"No; not for me. Shall she die or disappear?"

"People who only disappear sometimes reappear."

"You are right."

"Then I hardly think it necessary for me to decide; you know what to do."

"It is a risky game."

"How?"

"The girl is an heiress."

"So is Lucy."

"Search is being made for the girl."

"Yes, but if she is never found?"

"The search will be made for the guilty parties."

"The guilty parties?"

"Yes."

"Who are the guilty parties?"

"That remains to be seen."

"I reckon I see what you are trying to present."

"Possibly you do."

"Your price?"

"You must marry me."

"If I marry you I lose the fortune."

"No."

"It would only come to me as the husband of Lucy."

"You can marry Lucy."

"I do not understand."

"Lucy can disappear also in good time."

"Ah, I take your suggestion."

"And what do you think of it?"

"You know I love you."

"You do love me?"

"Yes, you know I do."

A moment the woman was silent, but at length she said:

"I wish I could implicitly believe your statement."

"You can; you know I professed my love for you before I ever saw this pale-faced Lucy."

"Then why did you forsake me for her?"

"I never did; you bid me win her love. If it had not been your own suggestion you would at this moment be my wife."

"Do you swear you are telling me the truth?"

"I do."

"And you will make me your wife?"

Again for a moment Saunders was silent, but at length he said:

"It remains with you altogether."

"It remains with me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

The woman spoke in agitated tones.

"Clear the way to the fortune, and then rid me of a hated incumbrance, and you become my wife."

"You mean what you say?"

"I do, and my words are plain."

"I shall remove the girl first?"

"Yes."

"You will marry Lucy?"

"Yes."

"I shall then remove Lucy?"

"Yes."

"And you will marry me?"

"As I live I will keep my word."

"It shall be done."

"When?"

"I will take my own way, and I will report to you."

"When shall I see you again?"

"I will await a summons from you."

The man and woman separated, and our hero fell to the woman's trail, and as he walked along Manfred muttered:

"This is wonderful. I am the girl's good genius. I almost feel like a fairy."

The woman proceeded along until she reached a certain street, when she fixed her eyes on a certain house. The detective was watching all her movements, and was satisfied he had found the hiding-place of the mysterious owner of the trunk.

The house was a small two-story building, stood back from the street, and appeared to be occupied by a small family.

The veiled woman watched the house for many hours, and at length an idea struck the detective. He muttered:

"I must make a bold move."

Manfred took his bearings and started to carry out a scheme that had entered his mind. He went around to the street in the rear of the small house and found a building with an alley-way running between it and the adjoining house.

"That just suits me," he said.

The detective managed to get through the alley-way, and stole to the rear of the little frame house by passing to the rear of the yard into which the alley opened. There was no yard in the rear of the little frame house; the windows overlooked the yard where our hero lay concealed.

It was twilight, and Manfred determnined that he must act rapidly.

He took a glance at the windows of the little frame house, and there were revealed to him the outlines of a female figure.

Our hero was a good climber and a bold, daring man. His plan was speedily formed, and in a few minutes and in a sneak-thief manner he gained the roof of the little frame house, and he soon managed to open the decaying scuttle cover and easily let himself down into the house. He had taken the proper bearings, and passed to the door of the room where he had seen the female figure.

He stood a moment undetermined as to his course. He did not wish to disturb the girl in an abrupt manner lest she might give an alarm, but after a moment's thought he rapped gently on the door, and a sweet voice said:

"Come in."

The detective opened the door and stepped across the threshold. There was a light in the room. He expected to hear the girl make an outcry, but she did not, only a look of surprise and wonderment passed over her beautiful face, and so the detective recognized her. He had seen it before under strange and startling circumstances. He had seen it but an instant, but he recognized it. He had found the mysterious owner of the mysterious trunk at last, and the first words that fell from her lips were thrilling and strange. She showed no excitement, but said, in a calm voice:

"Well, you have found me at last."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE detective was taken all aback, and in a surprised tone said:

"You recognize me?"

"I do."

"Who am I?"

"The gentleman I met on the train coming from C——."

"The gentleman whom you so neatly evaded?"

"Yes."

"How did you know I was searching for you?"

"It was an idea I had."

"An idea?"

"Yes."

"Whence came the idea?"

"I knew some one was searching for me."

"You did?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"I saw the advertisements in the papers."

"And how do you know it was I put them there?"

"I did not know it until a moment ago."

"And how was it revealed?"

"By your presence here."

"You are a wonderful girl."

The lady remained silent an instant, but, later on, said:

"Is it not true?"

"Yes, it is true I have been searching for you."

"Why did you seek me?"

"I am your friend."

"My friend?"

"Yes."

The girl laughed in a bitter manner, and said:

"I have no friends; but I am resolute and determined. I do not fear any more. I will not stand this life of a fugitive any longer!"

"Miss Silver," said the detective, "there is no reason why you should lead the life of a fugitive."

The girl uttered a cry, sprung to her feet, and approached our hero, and clutching his arm, said:

"What did you say?"

"Shall I repeat it?"

"Yes."

"I said: 'Miss Silver, there is no need for your being a fugitive.'"

"You call me Miss Silver?"

"Yes."

"Where did you hear that name?"

"It was your father's name. Your name is Mary Martin Silver."

"This is wonderful," said the girl.

"No, it is not wonderful."

"Who are you?"

"I am your friend."

"My friend?" repeated the girl.

"Yes, your friend; and I come from a nearer and dearer friend."

"You come from a nearer and dearer friend?"

"I do."

"Speak!" cried the girl.

"I will in good time."

"Speak now!"

"I will in good time."

"Tell me who is this nearer and dearer friend."

"You have guessed."

"I have guessed?"

"Yes."

"My mother?"

"I will not say more now."

"Why not?"

"I must hear your story."

"I can tell you nothing."

"You must tell me all."

"Not one word until you prove to me who you are."

A moment the detective thought, and at length said:

"Sit down; I will tell you all."

Manfred proceeded, and in detail related all that had occurred since the night when he first met the mysterious veiled lady.

During his recital he was interrupted by continual ejaculations, but otherwise permitted to proceed to the end.

When he had concluded, the girl said:

"I know what you have told me is the truth."

"Certainly it is the truth; but will you tell me why you so readily believe me?"

"You have been so frank, so positively frank."

"How do you know I have been frank?"

"Because I know of some of the facts you have narrated to me; and, besides, you have described the contents of the trunk. If you were a dishonest man you would never have mentioned the fact of the treasure in the trunk."

"You are a person of quick discernment, I see."

"Yes, and I wish my poor father had been a man of equal discernment. I must inherit the talent from my mother. My mother!" repeated the girl. "Oh, blessed thought. I have a mother! And you can take me to her?"

"I can."

"When will you do so??"

"To-night—very soon; but first I must hear your story."

We have not attempted to present the agitation and excitement betrayed by the fair girl Mary Martin Silver. We have but rushed forward the facts according to our usual plan of narration.

"Take me to my mother and I will tell my story."

"No, you must tell it to me; have I not earned the right to hear your tale?"

A moment the girl was lost in thought, but at length said:

"Yes, you have earned the right."

"Then tell the tale to me."

"I have but little to tell."

"Tell me all."

"I know nothing of a mother. All I remember was being under the care of a lady who claimed to be a relative. She told me I had a father, and told me also that my mother was dead. Time passed until I became old enough to go to school, when I was sent to a seminary, where I remained until a few weeks ago."

"And did your father never come to see you?"

"Never. He corresponded with me, but strangely enough never came to see me, nor had the principal of the seminary ever seen my father, but my bills were all promptly paid, and the most liberal charges were recognized, and so matters went on."

"Did your father ever tell you about your mother?"

"Not in his letters, but when I saw him he told me all."

"How was it you were finally summoned to see him?"

"I received a letter from my father giving me the most extraordinary commands. He bid me leave the seminary secretly, to actually steal away, and not give a living soul the least intimation of my intentions or my destination. I was bidden to proceed to C——. I did so, and for the first time met my father, and then he told me all, told me how he had wronged my mother, and told me how relatives were seeking to rob me of my inheritance, and he said he believed that my mother lived, and he further said that he and I would go alone over the earth and search for her."

"Was your father perfectly rational, Miss Silver?" queried the detective.

"I thought he was, but I am now satisfied he was not. He told me of his great wealth, and had it already packed in a trunk, and the trunk he had marked in my name. He bid me go and check the trunk to New York, and he said that in the morning we would go together and seek my mother—his wife. I went to the depot, secured the checks, and returned to the house. When I did so, a horrible sight met my gaze! During my absence my father had inflicted upon himself a fatal wound. I would have summoned help, but he retained his senses, and on my life urged me not to do so. He said the wound was fatal. He intended it should be; and, then he gave me certain instructions. He told me I must seek my mother alone. He said no one knew of my existence, and they must not know of it, or I would be murdered for my wealth."

"Your father was nearer right than you imagine," said our hero.

CHAPTER XL.

"Yes," said the girl, "I am convinced he was right."

"Your father, then, really killed himself?"

"He did."

"I am glad it was not a murder."

"It was self-murder."

"Did he assign a reason for his act?"

"He did; he said he was mad, since he had brooded and brooded for so many years that he had just enough reason remaining to send for me and give me his final instructions."

"Then he intended all the time to kill himself?"

"Yes."

"And he bid you conceal your identity?"

"At all hazards he bid me flee from the house secretly, to secure the trunk and seek my mother, and he gave me a will regularly signed and executed, giving part of his wealth to my mother and part to me, and in case of my mother's death I was to have all."

"You have the will?"

"Yes, and also a deed of gift. He gave everything to me. The will was only to be produced in case I found my mother and complications arose."

"And now tell me, why did you not claim your trunk?"

"My meeting with you on the train frightened me. I saw that you suspected something, and at the last moment a most terrible contingency was presented."

"What contingency?"

"I recognized the possibility of my being accused as the murderess of my father. It would not be known that I was his child, and the fact of my having the trunk in my possession I knew would appear strange and under certain circumstances fatal to me."

"And what was your intention?"

"To leave the trunk for a week or so and then call for it."

"And when you called?"

"I found it had been taken away."

"And what were your intentions?"

"To wait; but there was a suspicion running through my mind that you had the trunk; indeed, I recognized you all along as the advertiser."

"Why did you not answer the advertisement?"

"I had just decided to do so, and to-day an incident occurred that fixed my determination."

"Your meeting with the veiled woman?"

The girl gave a start.

"You know about that meeting?"

"Yes."

"This is strange."

"It was an accidental discovery."

The detective related the incidents known to our readers.

"And now what shall I do?" demanded Miss Silver.

"You shall go to your mother; meantime I will fix this woman; but tell me who lives in this house?"

"I have merely hired this room."

"The woman who lives here is a stranger to you?"

"Yes."

A moment the detective thought and then said:

"I have a plan; go tell the woman if any one calls to inquire for you to admit them."

"I am here under a false name."

"It matters not."

At this moment there came a knock at the door; it was the woman who rented the room to Miss Silver.

"There is a lady asking for you, miss."

"Did she give the name?"

"She did not, nor did she give her own. She merely said she had called to see the young lady who was living with me."

Miss Silver and the detective exchanged glances, and the former said:

"You can show the lady up."

A moment passed, and the woman whom our hero knew as Madge entered the room. Miss Silver had disappeared, but a gentleman sat in the room. As the veiled lady entered our hero exclaimed in a familiar voice:

"Hello, Madge, you here?"

The woman uttered an exclamation of amazement.

"Come in," said our hero, "come in, Madge; got your tools with you?"

"Who are you and what do you mean?"

"Got your tools with you?"

"I came to see a lady."

"I know you did. You came to see Miss Silver. You came to murder her, so Lucy will get the fortune; then Saunders will marry Lucy; and then you will kill Lucy, and Saunders will marry you; eh! how's that?"

As the detective had spoken, he had advanced to the paralyzed woman, and had removed her veil so that her ghastly features were revealed.

"Who are you?" she murmured.

"It does not matter who I am. You see, I know who you are."

The woman was speechless, and the detective said:

"I've just a word, Madge; if you and Saunders are found in the United States after to-morrow, I'll put my hands on you. I've got the whole scheme."

The woman could not speak, and the detective said:

"You understand me?"

"It's wonderful," said the woman in a low tone.

"Nothing wonderful about it. Crime is always exposed in the end; now, this scheme is all up. You are a bad woman. I could send you to jail. I've got your pedigree, but I don't want to bother with you."

"I see it all."

"What do you see?"

"You are a detective."

"You are right; and I've been upon your track all the time. Miss Silver has been playing a game under my instructions, so as to enable me to draw you out. I've got you, and you're harmless; I've got the whole business; and now what will you do?"

"Leave America."

"That's it; go at once and take Saunders with you, and he might as well marry you."

The woman disappeared, and half an hour later our hero entered his own house, having Mary Martin Silver, the mysterious owner of the mysterious trunk, with him.

We will not attempt to describe the meeting between mother and daughter. The night was spent in explanations, and morning found them still talking.

The following day Manfred was sought to give his advice.

The detective had meantime been to interview Lucy Brownell. To her he had explained everything, including the character of Saunders and his devilish compact. The girl was overwhelmed.

The detective learned then that Saunders was at the bottom of the whole scheme. The girl, after all, proved that she had done all under the guidance and influence of Saunders.

Our hero advised Mrs. Silver to take Lucy Brownell under her protection, and it was so decided.

All matters were cleared up, the will was produced and proved, and identities established, and once more our wonderful hero, Manfred, the Metamorphosist, had worked out a great detective game; and having finished one job, he swung around the circle for other work to do, and fell later on into a mystery that rivaled even the story of the strange trunk.

THE END.

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